

THE PEDAGOGICAL PHILOSOPHIES & TECHNIQUES OF DAVID EFFRON

by

Ian Passmore

Submitted to the faculty of the  
Jacobs School of Music in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree,  
Doctor of Music  
Indiana University  
December 2018

Accepted by the faculty of the  
Indiana University Jacobs School of Music  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree,  
Doctor of Music

Doctoral Committee

---

Halina Goldberg, Research Director

---

Arthur Fagen, Chair

---

Jorja Fleezanis

---

Walter Huff

3 December 2018

Copyright © 2018

Ian Passmore

*To Carroll, Nancy, and Ronnie Passmore, and Dianna Fiore*



## Preface

The transcripts presented in this document represent four interviews, conducted by the author, with Maestro David Effron. These interviews were recorded in Maestro Effron's home in Bloomington, IN on July 12<sup>th</sup> and July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2018. The transcripts have been heavily edited for the sake of clarity and readability—they are not transcribed *verbatim*. Filler words (“umm, uh, etc.”) and long pauses in speech have been removed entirely, as have some occasional verbal tics (“yeah, like, etc.”). Furthermore, grammatical errors such as run-on sentences have been “untangled” wherever possible. An occasional expletive here and there has been retained for expressive reasons. Every effort, though, has been made to ensure that the integrity of the conversations has remained intact. An introductory chapter has also been added, in my own voice, to introduce Maestro Effron to those who may be unfamiliar with him and his contributions to conducting and education. In this chapter, I also attempt to explain how his and my relationship came to be, and guide the reader through what I consider to be the most valuable and/or illuminating passages of the text.

Throughout the document, you will see the dual nature of our relationship reflected in the two ways I address Professor Effron: as an inspiring artist and mentor whom I deeply respect (Maestro Effron), and as someone with whom I maintain a very dear friendship (David). A crucial part of my contribution to this project is being in this unique dual position and therefore I preserve this dual form of address, calling him alternately Maestro Effron and David.

The score excerpts that appear as examples in Chapters Two and Six are included because they are referenced by Maestro Effron in the interview. I excerpted these

examples from the specific editions Maestro Effron uses as his primary musical texts for the teaching and conducting of these pieces.

# Table of Contents

Preface.....	v
Table of Contents.....	vii
List of Examples .....	viii
List of Figures .....	x
List of Appendices .....	xi
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Chapter 2: Biography .....	16
Chapter 3: On Conducting .....	40
Chapter 4: On the Rehearsal Process .....	55
Chapter 5: On Repertoire & Programming.....	70
Chapter 6: “Case Studies” or, On the Importance of Musical Instinct .....	83
Chapter 7: On the Teaching of Conducting .....	128
Chapter 8: Conclusion.....	145
Appendix A: Orchestral Repertoire List.....	154
Appendix B: Opera and Ballet Repertoire List.....	170
Appendix C: Selected Photos.....	176
Bibliography .....	183

## List of Examples

Example 2.1: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvmt. III, mm. 1-4 .....	25
Example 6.1: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 10-15, ascending sixteenth-notes in the strings.....	86
Example 6.2: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 20-24, solo oboe at m. 23.....	86
Example 6.3: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 61-70, transition from introduction into <i>Vivace</i> .....	88
Example 6.4: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 82-90, bow usage in mm. 84-88 vs. mm. 89-90.....	89
Example 6.5: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 82-90, <i>fermata</i> in m. 88 .....	89
Example 6.6: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 61-66, primary rhythmic motive in mm. 63-66 .....	90
Example 6.7: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 296-303, fermatas in mm. 299-300 .....	92
Example 6.8: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 304-329, dynamic pacing in mm. 309-323 .....	94
Example 6.9: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 356-364 .....	96
Example 6.10: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 363-370, <i>tutti</i> <i>fortissimo</i> .....	97
Example 6.11: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 409-423, dynamic pacing from mm. 413-423.....	98

Example 6.12: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. II, mm. 1-6, opening rhythm .....	99
Example 6.13: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. II, mm. 27-29 .....	100
Example 6.14: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. II, mm. 117-120, solo clarinet.....	101
Example 6.15: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. IV, mm. 312-323, <i>ff</i> vs. <i>sf</i> .....	106
Example 6.16: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. IV, m. 427, first <i>fff</i> ..	107
Example 6.17: Jean Sibelius, <i>Finlandia</i> , mm. 95-98, Allegro preceding Rehearsal F...	109
Example 6.18: W. A. Mozart, <i>Le Nozze di Figaro</i> , Act 3, No. 17, “ <i>Hai già vinta la causa!</i> ,” mm. 1-4 .....	120

## List of Figures

Figure 1: David Effron, aged 2-4 years, c. 1940-42 .....	176
Figure 2: David Effron graduate recital program, 1961 .....	177
Figure 3: David Effron in rehearsal with the New York City Opera Orchestra, c. 1968	178
Figure 4: David Effron in performance with the New York City Opera, c. 1969-1970.	178
Figure 5: David Effron in performance with the New York City Opera, c. 1972 .....	179
Figure 6: David Effron in performance with the Brevard Music Center Orchestra, 2006 .....	180
Figure 7: David Effron in performance at Indiana University, 2012.....	180
Figure 8: David Effron in performance at Indiana University, 2012.....	181
Figure 9: David Effron in rehearsal with Indiana University Opera Theatre, premiere of P. Q. Phan's <i>Tale of Lady Thi Kinh</i> , 2014.....	181
Figure 10: David Effron, Indiana University faculty headshot, 2000.....	182
Figure 11: David and wife Arlene Effron with Ian Passmore, Indiana University retirement concert, 2016 .....	182

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix A: Orchestral Repertoire List.....	154
Appendix B: Opera and Ballet Repertoire.....	170
Appendix C: Selected Photos.....	176

## Chapter 1: Introduction

Maestro David Effron was born July 28, 1938, in Cincinnati, OH. The son of musician parents Sigmund<sup>1</sup> and Babette Effron,<sup>2</sup> David seemed predestined for a life in music. His father Sigmund served as concertmaster of the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra from 1946-1973, and his mother performed as a pianist with that same organization. In the summers, as they have done since 1920, the Cincinnati Symphony serves as the orchestra for the Cincinnati Opera; and it was this summer series that first attracted young David to the field and genre with which he would be associated for his entire career: conducting and opera.

Maestro Effron studied piano performance and conducting at the University of Michigan and Indiana University (where he would later close out his own illustrious teaching career), respectively. Upon graduating from Indiana University, he was the recipient of the coveted Fulbright Scholarship, which allowed him to travel to Germany and study at the *Staatliche Hochschule für Musik* in Cologne (today *Hochschule für Musik Köln*). Soon after his arrival, however—due to an unexpected illness at the Cologne Opera—David soon found himself elevated to his first professional staff position.

Upon receiving a job offer from then-General Director Julius Rudel<sup>3</sup> (as well as a Rockefeller Grant), David returned to the United States to join the coaching and

---

<sup>1</sup> Sigmund Effron (1911-1986); American violinist; concertmaster, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, 1946-1973.

<sup>2</sup> Babette Effron (1912-1995); American pianist; pianist, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra.

<sup>3</sup> Julius Rudel (1921-2014); American conductor; Principal Conductor and General Director, New York City Opera, 1957-1979.



conducting staff of the New York City Opera in 1964. David quickly rose through the ranks of the City Opera, working his way up from rehearsal pianist to Chorus Master, to recurring guest conductor. In 1970, at the invitation of Max Rudolf,<sup>4</sup> David received yet another job offer, this time to join the conducting faculty of the prestigious Curtis Institute of Music in Philadelphia. Concurrent with his City Opera duties, David would remain on the Curtis faculty until 1977.

In 1977, Maestro Effron became head of the orchestra program at the Eastman School of Music in Rochester, NY. This would be his first full-time position as principal conductor and teacher. Ten years later, in 1987, he accepted his first professional Music Director position with the Youngstown Symphony Orchestra in Ohio. He would remain with Youngstown until 1996, while retaining his conducting and teaching position at Eastman.

Maestro Effron's tenure at the Eastman School of Music came to an end in 1998, when he joined the orchestral conducting faculty of the Indiana University Jacobs School of Music, his own alma mater. This position, which completed the "full circle" back to Indiana, would last until his retirement in May 2016.

I first met David Effron in April 2013, when I was a participant in the Ithaca International Conducting Masterclass (an ongoing joint venture between Ithaca College and Cornell University). Aside from the typical masterclass activities where the maestro would coach various student conductors, there was also an opportunity to observe an open rehearsal of the Cornell Chamber Orchestra with Maestro Effron as a guest

---

<sup>4</sup> Max Rudolf (1902-1995); German conductor; conducting staff, Metropolitan Opera, 1946-1958; Music Director, Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, 1958-1970; conducting faculty, Curtis Institute of Music, 1970-73, 1983-1995. Author of *The Grammar of Conducting*.

conductor.<sup>5</sup> The repertoire was Mozart, Symphony No. 29 in A major, K. 201/186a; and, to my knowledge, they had never met before that rehearsal.

From the very opening bars, I was struck by the maestro's physical technique: it was a bizarre combination of awkward and elegant, but it worked for him. Most importantly, his technique looked like the music should sound (or at least like he wanted it to sound.) Toward the end of the first movement, I had to leave the room to take a brief phone call. While I was gone, he went back to the beginning and started to rehearse some passages. As I reentered the room, I stopped dead in my tracks. This student orchestra of non-majors sounded like they had been replaced by full-time professional musicians. The Mozart was suddenly stylish and refined in ways that went far beyond what I had heard just ten minutes or so before. As I returned to my seat and continued to observe the rehearsal, I began to more fully appreciate the artistic results that are possible when bright young musicians, playing great repertoire, are met by a naturally expressive conductor with a lifetime of experience. I approached Maestro Effron after our final performance with the Ithaca College Symphony Orchestra, and I expressed my interest in studying with him at Indiana. He seemed to reciprocate and told me to keep in touch and call him at home.

During this time, I was completing my Master's degree at the University of Delaware, studying with my dear friend Maestro Jim Anderson, who also happened to be

---

<sup>5</sup> The Cornell University Chamber Orchestra is, I believe, comprised mostly of non-majors. But, like many ensembles of its kind—non-major, student orchestras at incredibly prestigious schools—they play surprisingly well. Students at schools such as Cornell often have extensive musical backgrounds including private lessons, youth orchestras, all-state honors orchestras, etc. And, although they have chosen to major in another field—medicine, law, business, etc.—many of them still wish to participate in some sort of musical activity.

one of Maestro Effron's last doctoral students at Eastman.<sup>6</sup> In fact, prior to my attending the Ithaca masterclass, Jim had prepared me for the experience, letting me know that David was an occasionally tough but always honest teacher, as well as the finest opera conductor and greatest musical risk-taker he had ever seen. In the fall of 2013, the Delaware Opera Theatre program presented Benjamin Britten's *The Rape of Lucretia*—for which I served as the Assistant Conductor—and Jim invited Maestro Effron to guest conduct the opening night performance. I was fortunate to assist the maestro in the months leading up to the first performance, and witness Jim's observations first-hand. David and I kept in touch after his visit and, in the spring of 2014, I auditioned for and was accepted into the doctoral program at Indiana University.

As a doctoral student at Indiana from 2014-2017, I studied with both David Effron and Maestro Arthur Fagen.<sup>7</sup> I also learned that my connections to them were many. Aside from David Effron, Jim Anderson and I also studied with the Estonian conductor Maestro Tonu Kalam at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, albeit twenty years or so apart.<sup>8</sup> Tonu Kalam and Arthur Fagen had been classmates in the conducting program at the Curtis Institute of Music—as students of Max Rudolf—where a young David Effron was also on the conducting faculty. It was at Tonu's suggestion that Jim went on to study with David at Eastman all those years later. And so, just as Jim had been one of David's final students at Eastman, I was fortunate to be one of his final

---

<sup>6</sup> James Allen Anderson (b. 1965); American conductor and educator; Director of Orchestral Activities, University of Delaware; former President, Conductors Guild.

<sup>7</sup> Arthur Fagen (b. 1951); American conductor; Music Director, Atlanta Opera, 2010-present; Music Director, Dortmund Philharmonic Orchestra and Dortmund Opera, 2002-2007; conducting faculty, Indiana University, 2008-present.

<sup>8</sup> Tonu Kalam (b. 1948); Estonian conductor and educator; Music Director, University of North Carolina Symphony Orchestra; former Music Director, Longview Symphony Orchestra (TX) and Illinois Opera Theatre (University of Illinois: Urbana-Champaign).

students at Indiana and thus, one of the final students of his teaching career. (For a photo of David Effron with the author, please see Figure 11 in Appendix C.)

At that time, the orchestral conducting program at Indiana accommodated approximately ten students. Each of us would take turns leading the Conductor's Orchestra—essentially, the “practice” orchestra for our studio—on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, with “real-time” feedback from either Maestro Effron or Maestro Fagen. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, we would meet for further practice with two pianos, more feedback, and various topics of discussion related to the profession. Beyond that, we had our own recitals with orchestra, which one or both of the two faculty *maestri* would attend; and we were free (encouraged, in fact) to attend and observe as many of the regular Indiana University orchestra rehearsals as possible.

When coaching conducting students with the Conductor's Orchestra, Maestro Effron always appreciated those willing to take a risk and try something new. If he asked one of us to try something different and potentially uncomfortable with our gesture, he wouldn't get upset if that suggestion just didn't work—he understood and appreciated the trial-and-error nature of the practice. The only thing he would not tolerate was obvious unpreparedness or an unwillingness to learn. In the rare event that he had trouble getting his point across to one of us, he would demonstrate what he meant by conducting our orchestra himself. I think I only saw him do that once or twice....

The Tuesday/Thursday seminar classes were far less structured without the “constraint” of sharing the room with a full orchestra. He often liked to recap the happenings of the most recent Conductor's Orchestra session, sometimes asking to see one of us conduct problematic passages with one or two pianos serving as the “orchestra.” This would typically lead into stories from Maestro Effron about his

experience(s) with the particular repertoire being conducted, the generally craft and business of music and conducting, or any number of other topics. This reliance on stories and metaphors is often what made Maestro Effron such an effective “coach” for young conductors. He had a gift for being able to appreciate the natural strengths in each student, then use his own experiences—as expressed through stories, metaphors, etc.—to pinpoint and fortify their weaknesses. This was always done to bring each student as close as possible to his ideal of the “total” conductor, one who possesses and can express (by his or her own unique means) the things needed to make an orchestra play to its full artistic potential.

Teaching conducting is very often a “do as I say, not as I do” endeavor, and that is somewhat true in David Effron’s teaching, as well. (He would often insist that a student conductor stand up straight in front of the orchestra, so as to project an image of authority and confidence. In his own practice, however, he might start out that way, but would eventually contort himself into all sorts of bizarre postures in order to achieve a particular musical result.) In many other ways, though, this did not apply. He would often tell our class, “no two beats should ever look the same,” and he most certainly practiced what he preached. Indeed, no two of his beats ever looked the same, and he never conducted the same passage of music the same way again—every moment seemed spontaneous. Maestro Effron would also talk to us about the importance of musical conviction and a conductor’s ability to make an orchestra believe that there is simply no other way a particular piece of music could be interpreted. This was one of his most notable strengths.

I think most conducting teachers would agree that the physical act of conducting, in its most basic form of beat patterns, etc., is not all that difficult to teach. The other aspects of the craft, though—score study, critical listening, how one rehearses and speaks

to an orchestra—those things are much less “set in stone” and thus more difficult to approach as “teachable” subjects. This is doubly true when dealing with artists/teachers for whom those skills might have come quite naturally, and Maestro Effron was no exception.

He is a naturally emotional, expressive musician, possessing perfect pitch and an astonishing ear for musical detail. For him, the act of showing the music through gesture is second nature, as is hearing every nuance coming from the orchestra and being able to correct it. As his students, sure, he could guide us toward being able to express the details of the score. This would usually involve experimenting with his gestural ideas, as well as our own, until one or both of us found something that resonated with the orchestra. But, when observing him in his own rehearsals and performances, his physical technique went above and beyond anything that we ever discussed in class.

Likewise, he would often ask us in front of the orchestra, “did you hear that wrong note?” It could have been anything from a single wrong sixteenth-note in a swath of them, to something much more basic like a misprint in a sustained chord. For him, both instances would have been equally simple to correct. In fact, I have seen him catch and correct far more discreet mistakes in repertoire ranging from the thorniest scores of Arnold Schoenberg to those of Benjamin Britten. When pressed about such issues in class, the maestro would often have trouble articulating exactly how to really train or learn those skills, simply leaving it to, “you either have it or you don’t.” To some extent, that may be true, at least for some aspects of the profession. Some examples might be conducting with vivid expression and spontaneity (beyond what might be capable within the “confines” of the conventional beat patterns, at least), having and above-average ability to hear and correct problems in the orchestra, and how one approaches an

orchestra (in rehearsal, socially, etc.—the social psychology of the situation). Having observed Maestro Effron’s conducting, rehearsing, and teaching over the course of several years, and having been granted access to his older, heavily mark-up scores, I believe I can extrapolate some recommendations for how one might begin to learn such “unteachable” skills. Of course, my own experience as a conductor and teacher has to spill into such advice.

Let’s start with the physical act of conducting, but doing so with the utmost expression and spontaneity. How does one go beyond the beat patterns often found in so many textbooks and ultimately arrive at the ability to transmit a vivid and convincing musical interpretation through his/her body, in a way in which the orchestra feels compelled to follow? That’s a lot to consider, but I do believe this aspect of conducting can be (at least to some extent) taught. The path to such gestural and musical “freedom” lies in physical practice and score study.

Much like a composer must know the basic rules of voice-leading, in order to know how and when to tastefully break those rules, a conductor must be so at-home with the conventional beat patterns, that he/she feels comfortable abandoning those patterns in the pursuit of musical expression. That level of comfort can only come with a great deal of practice. When the conventional beat patterns have been practiced to the point at which they become second-nature, then a conductor might try beating “outside the box,” or not beating at all. This is where score study comes into play.

A conductor must study every aspect of the score, from the composer’s life (and whatever bearing that might have on the piece being studied) to all its musical elements (melody, harmony, rhythm, form, phrase structure, dynamics, orchestration, etc.). But, to

paraphrase my colleague Thomas Wilkins,<sup>9</sup> one can study everything there is to know about a piece without ever forming an opinion about it. And that’s what a conductor’s interpretation is at its core—an educated opinion about how every element of a piece must be performed. I would venture to guess that most conductors could—and in fact, do—satisfy the first, more “nuts and bolts” requirement. The latter, though, by its very nature is a far more slippery slope to climb. So, how does one come to form an interpretation about a piece? Then, how is that interpretation best expressed through the gestures of conducting?

First, once one has a firm grasp on all the technical details of the score, go back to the beginning and determine the number of musical “characters” in the piece. If that proves to be difficult at first, go back to basics. “Is this character happy, sad, or something else?” Then, go further—study with a thesaurus. For every musical character that one identifies, try to come up with three to five additional emotional descriptors. This way, when rehearsing an orchestra, one has several readily-available options to describe any given passage. Furthermore—especially when dealing with student musicians—the conductor should be ready to offer technical advice on how to achieve each character. It is simply not enough to say, “this passage has to be manic and violent.” What part of the bow should the students be using to achieve that result? How much bow speed, pressure, etc.? Is it closer to the bridge, the fingerboard, or right in the middle? This further step of marrying emotional descriptors to technical advice came from Jim Anderson, whom I mentioned earlier.

---

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Wilkins (b. 1956); American conductor and educator; Music Director, Omaha Symphony, 2005-present; Principal Conductor, Hollywood Bowl Orchestra, 2014-present; conducting faculty, Indiana University, 2017-present.



Maestro Effron's own scores reflect this pragmatic way of studying. Older markings, made when he was still quite young, show an intense analytical approach to the score; every musical detail has been considered, including a thorough harmonic analysis. As he became more comfortable with the repertoire over the years, however—having already fully assimilated the “drier” details of the music—such analytical markings seem to disappear almost completely, in favor of the more character-based approach described above.

Of course, the more obvious these expressive, emotional details are in a conductor's gestures, the less he/she will need to stop and explain them to an orchestra—ideally, anyway.... But how does one get translate those details into physical gesture? There are a few ways to go about it. One: as I mentioned previously, the conventional beat patterns must be second-nature for the conductor—they must happen automatically, without thought or effort. With this in mind, the conductor should re-approach the score and ask (using our previous example), “what does ‘manic and violent’ look like?” Come up with several different options. Maybe go so far as to have a trusted friend try to guess each character and offer constructive criticism. A member of the orchestra might be an ideal partner in this exercise. This is essential to ensuring the conductor feels uninhibited on the podium, which in turn is essential to uninhibited music-making.

This joining of an educated and vivid interpretation of the score, to an equally clear and expressive technique, brings us one step closer to Maestro Effron's concept of the “total” conductor. But what about critical listening and process of actually rehearsing an orchestra? Those two elements of conducting are closely tied to score study and technique. The more concrete a conductor's interpretation is, and the more comfortable he/she is expressing that interpretation through gesture, the easier it becomes for that

person to listen to what the orchestra is doing and respond accordingly (i.e. rehearse). If the conductor isn't sure about how a certain passage should sound or be performed, how could he/she possibly relay such information to the orchestra? Likewise, if the conductor is too concerned with how a certain passage should be conducted, there's a good chance that person is not hearing all the details of the orchestra. Simply put, more meaningful score study and conducting allows for better listening and somewhat-better rehearsing.

Let me explain what I mean by "somewhat-better" rehearsing. Score study is a personal endeavor in which each conductor must ultimately find his/her own way. The same holds true (at least partially) when it comes to the conducting student's physical/gestural preparation. The process of rehearsing, however, can only truly be learned through experience with an orchestra. The conductor must go into the rehearsal armed with a vivid musical image and corresponding technique, stand in front of an opinionated group of individuals, and mold their individual sounds into a unified musical image that matches his or her own. The rehearsal is where the "rubber meets the road," as the saying goes. Each conducting student responds differently to the rehearsal situation. Some benefit from having a more experienced conductor in the room as both a coach and "safety net" on which they can rely, and others perform better without such assistance—the "sink or swim" approach. This process of learning how to rehearse and "read the room" falls under the umbrella of rehearsal "psychology," and is yet another reason why this aspect of conducting must be experienced with orchestra. The ability to quickly perceive and adapt to a given rehearsal situation is not necessarily a case of "you either have it or you don't;" instead, it is an instance where the conductor must learn (through experience) how to make his/her unique personality work *for* him/her, rather than against. Crucial rehearsal elements like time management and how one should speak to an

orchestra (or to a particular player) can be discussed in a classroom setting, but that type of preparation is not an adequate substitute for authentic experience with orchestra.

Again, some students benefit from having a more experienced conductor mentor them through this process with the orchestra, while others do better without such assistance.

Each of these topics, including an overview of Maestro Effron's life/career, is discussed in the chapters that follow. However, as is the nature of conversation—particularly of conversation between two individuals who know each other quite well and are comfortable around each other—the topic can occasionally veer off-course. The following will serve as a guide through each chapter, directing the reader toward what I perceive to be the most interesting, useful, and/or illuminating passages of the text.

Chapter Two deals most directly with Maestro Effron's life and career, fleshing out those details much more fully than I have in this introductory chapter. I would highly recommend that Chapter Two be read in its entirety, as that information effectively establishes the foundational perspective from which David draws all of his responses. Chapters 3 & 4 and Chapters 5 & 6 were conceived as pairs, so they are presented as such in the following guide.

Chapter Three covers David's overriding philosophy regarding the responsibilities of the conductor, as well as his general beliefs about how one should conduct (pages 41-53). This discussion encompasses many different conducting considerations ranging from professional versus student orchestras, to the differences between symphonic and operatic conducting, and how to conduct a concerto. Score study is also discussed in this chapter on pages 53-54. Chapter Four attempts to grapple the sprawling issue of the rehearsal and how one should rehearse, beginning with David's general philosophy about how to plan a rehearsal and what one should expect throughout that ever-evolving process (pages 56-

58). As in the third chapter, various factors are considered throughout this discussion, such as how to rehearse with professionals versus students, symphony versus opera, concerto, etc. (pages 58-61). Pages 62-65 will be of particular interest to orchestra conductors, as they deal with the unique issue of using one's own parts/bowings and how to rehearse the strings. Finally, David and I close this chapter with a discussion about how to handle difficult rehearsal situations: apathy/confusion/contempt for the repertoire being rehearsed, waning energy, combative musicians and staff, etc. (pages 67-70).

Chapter Five begins our discussion proper on repertoire and programming, and touches on how to program for a professional orchestra versus a student one, as well as the differences between orchestral programming considerations and those that go on in an opera company (pages 71-75). Pages 75-76 touch on the topics of Mozart and Dvořák, and the reasons why Maestro Effron believes their music to be particularly good for teaching student orchestras. This chapter closes with a discussion about the repertoire for which David and I have a particular fondness, as well as the repertoire that we have yet to fully appreciate (pages 78-81). Chapter Six expands upon our repertoire discussion, while also drawing significantly upon the rehearsal techniques mentioned in Chapter Four. Beethoven's Seventh Symphony and Sibelius's *Finlandia* are introduced as "case studies" for specific issues related to conducting and rehearsing (pages 84-86). Rhythm, balance, dynamics, and bow usage are topics for discussion in the Beethoven first movement, as well as how to deal with two different types of potentially-problematic fermatas. With the second movement, Maestro Effron brings up a crucial concept for student orchestras—the importance of encouraging students to think of the orchestra as an overgrown chamber ensemble, to listen, watch, and move as they would if making chamber music together (pages 86-102). We eventually return to the interesting issue of

dynamics in Beethoven—specifically *fortissimo* versus *sforzando*, and the famous triple *forte* that appears in the Seventh Symphony finale (pages 106-109). *Finlandia* is discussed, but only briefly (pages 109-110), before the “case studies” discussion takes an admittedly unplanned and extremely interesting turn. Growing visibly frustrated with the relatively systematic dissection of scores, Maestro Efron shifts gears toward the importance of one’s own musical instincts (pages 110-113). Eventually, I, too, steer the conversation in a different direction, using the famous “Count’s Aria” from Mozart’s *Marriage of Figaro* as the basis for discussing the unique challenges involved when conducting a singer (pages 115-119). One of the maestro’s most frequently used opera-conducting techniques is explained at-length: the “neutral” position (pages 119-122). Chapter Six ends with a couple of Maestro Efron’s stories—one involving the opera *Die Fledermaus*, told to demonstrate the importance of being a reliable cover conductor; and the other recalling a production of *Tales of Hoffmann*, told to illustrate the difference in the relationship between the orchestra and a staff conductor, and the orchestra and the “maestro” (page 125-128).

Chapter Seven shows David as a teacher of conducting. Its opening pages establish the general responsibilities of the conducting teacher and the maestro’s personal beliefs about how to teach conducting. Of particular importance are the abilities to listen critically and show the music in every beat (page 129-132). He also explains how crucial it is for the conducting teacher to draw on the student’s own life experiences, in order to make him/her a better conductor. An example is given in which he compares ice skating to conducting the beginning of the third movement from Dvořák’s Eighth Symphony (pages 135-136). Pages 136-139 deal with the teaching of the non-physical aspects of the conductor’s craft: programming, rehearsal psychology, and the preparation of job

application materials. Pages 140-142 may be of particular interest to those in academia, as well as professional music directors looking to hire staff conductors—those pages deal with what to look for in a potential conducting student, and how an ideal conducting audition should be structured. This chapter’s final pages introduce another one of Maestro Effron’s most important conducting concepts, “filling the space,” as well as a brief discussion of repertoire that is most useful for the development of student conductors (pages 142-144).

Chapter Eight is the conclusion, and it presents a number of topics that both touch on and wrap up discussions from previous chapters. Pages 146-147 lay out the building blocks of a successful university orchestra and conducting program. Pages 148-151 deal with professional and academic search committees, as well as the audition process. Finally, pages 151-153 offer Maestro Effron’s closing thoughts and advice for anyone wishing to pursue a career in music.

## Chapter 2: Biography

- Ian Passmore: We'll start, as most stories do, at the beginning with some basic facts. When and where were you born?
- David Effron: I don't remember *[laughter]*. I was born in Cincinnati, Ohio in 1938. (For a photo of David Effron as a child, please see Figure 1 in Appendix C.)
- Ian Passmore: Just growing up, what were some of your first—or at least your most memorable—musical experiences as a child, either as a listener or as an observer?
- David Effron: My parents were both musicians. My mother [Babette Effron] was a pianist, my father [Sigmund Effron] was a violinist, and they played sonatas—violin and piano sonatas—a lot. I would hear them. That's my first remembrance of music. They'd play recitals, so they would practice together. I would hear all these violin sonatas, and I think from the time I was four, I remember it. That's a good way to learn the literature, too. Music was like drinking water in my household. It permeated the whole household and influenced everything. My father had a job in an orchestra and my mother accompanied a lot of people; so, that was the whole life. My other memory is playing sports. I always did some kind of sport, like baseball and basketball. I did that from an early time and I liked it.
- You talk about bicycle trips. That was a big time for kids to take long trips on bicycles, and I did that, too—I loved doing that. That's what I remember about my childhood, at least the good parts of it....
- Ian Passmore: Your father was actually the concertmaster of the Cincinnati Symphony for quite a long time, right?
- David Effron: Twenty-eight years.
- Ian Passmore: Besides your parents, who were some of your other musical influences as a child?

David Effron: Some of the guys in the orchestra. You know how the guys are with little kids. There was one guy, he'd give me a nickel every time I saw him. Another guy gave me money for ice cream. They were always friendly to me and so I fell in love with—like hero worshiping—people like the fourth bassoon. It didn't matter what they played, but they influenced me as “these are musicians and they're really cool guys,” and they were friendly to me. I loved the timpani player at the time. He was a great timpanist. I'd go to all the rehearsals, that's how I knew all these people. Especially in the summer when they did opera, I went to every single rehearsal. That's how I fell in love with opera. I would make friends with the musicians and hang out with them and all of that. Something probably akin to what Alan Gilbert<sup>10</sup> did with his parents when he...

Ian Passmore: In the New York Philharmonic.

David Effron: Yeah, probably something like that.

Ian Passmore: His mother, I think, is still in the orchestra.

David Effron: I think that's true.

Ian Passmore: Do you have any siblings or cousins that also pursued careers in music, or are you the only one?

David Effron: I do have siblings. I have a brother and a number of cousins, and nobody pursued anything in music.

Ian Passmore: Is there a particular moment at which you knew that you would pursue a career in music?

David Effron: I think it was preordained just by my background and my parents, and that's what we did. It was assumed, I guess, from other people. I really fell in love with the opera very early on. I loved opera and I loved the conductors because there were really excellent conductors in the summer. I didn't know if they were excellent or not, but I liked to watch them work and I liked to hear them yell at everybody. In those days you could say anything you wanted. He would stop and say, “violinist on the second stand, go back to

---

<sup>10</sup> Alan Gilbert (b. 1967); American conductor; Music Director, New York Philharmonic, 2009-2017.



school. You don't know how to play the violin." Can you imagine somebody saying that today? It was a theater atmosphere in every aspect, and as a child I was very influenced by that.

I remember seeing *La Boheme* for the first time in a rehearsal, and I was just mesmerized. I came home and told my mother, "some lady died at the opera today." It was all very real to me, and the theater atmosphere is always hype. I can't think of one moment.... I knew without knowing; I knew that that was what I was going to do.

Ian Passmore: Would it be safe to assume that you did not contemplate a career outside of music?

David Effron: I wanted to be a professional basketball player, but I didn't make any team. I was a very good offensive player. I wasn't a very good defensive player, and that doesn't bode very well for making a team. The other thing, I was too short. But I enjoyed it so much. In my fantasy world, I guess you could say, I dreamt of being a professional basketball player. When I taught at Curtis [Institute of Music], there was a period of three or four years where I'd go down every day to the gym and play ball. A lot of the guys I played ball with were guys from the Philadelphia 76ers, who were recovering from minor injuries and they were at the point where they were working out again. They'd play with us. And there were guys down there who were college players. So, that was about as far as I got, and those were pickup games.

Ian Passmore: What are your academic credentials? Where did you go to school and when?

David Effron: I went to the University of Michigan. I wasn't one of these children who thought out anything. With the kind of culture I came from and the environment I came from, my father more or less planned at least where I would go to school. He knew a lot of people and he thought that a university would be better for me than a conservatory, which was probably true (it was undoubtedly true). He had contacts at various schools and one of them was Michigan, and Michigan had a very good piano department then. So, I went to Michigan.

It was predestined. I didn't really have much to do with it. I can't imagine that situation today with any child. So, I was sent off to

Michigan. I spent four years there and then I went from Michigan to IU [Indiana University] and got a Master's. (For a photo of David Effron's graduate recital program, please see Figure 2 in Appendix C.) I spent two years here and then I went to Germany on a Fulbright Scholarship, got a job and stayed a little over three years. Then, I got this job in the New York City Opera and I also got a Rockefeller Grant at the same time. (For a photo of David Effron's earliest years with the New York City Opera, please see Figure 3 in Appendix C.)

I came back to here and then around 1970, I got the job at Curtis. Max Rudolf wanted me as his assistant and I knew him from the fact that he was conductor of the Cincinnati Symphony. That's when I had both feet occupied, one professionally and one in academia. I always kept doing professional work.

After that, in 1977, I became the head of the orchestra at the Eastman School of Music and stayed there until 1998. Then, I joined the faculty at IU from 1998 to 2016. (For photos of David Effron at Indiana University, please see Figures 7-10 in Appendix C.) In addition to those major positions, I was always either the head of a summer festival or went to a summer festival, every single year. I stayed at the New York City Opera after Curtis, for another twelve years—I was doing both. I was Music Director at Youngstown Symphony [Youngstown, OH] for...I don't remember. Ten years, maybe? And I was doing Eastman simultaneously. I always had my finger in a lot of pies.

Ian Passmore: Going back to growing up in a very musical household, I wanted to point out really quickly that both of your undergraduate and graduate degrees, are both in piano performance, correct?

David Effron: Yes.

Ian Passmore: Was the Fulbright, also?

David Effron: No, that was in conducting. But that didn't last very long, because somebody got sick at the theater in Cologne. I was only at the *Hochschule* for three months, and then, of all the people, they chose me. My German was coming along, but I wasn't quite fluent then. They chose me because of my piano playing, to go and be an assistant at the theater. That didn't sit well with my colleagues. You can go to school in Germany forever; it doesn't cost anything

either. There were guys that had been studying in this conducting class for years, and then they chose this little foreigner to go to the opera house instead of them. It didn't sit well with them, but I never went back to the *Hochschule*.

Ian Passmore: Had you already been working professionally before you went to school?

David Effron: No.

Ian Passmore: Okay.

David Effron: You mean in high school?

Ian Passmore: Before you went to college, yeah. I didn't know if you had done some "pre-professional" gigs.

David Effron: No, I didn't work professionally, but I was around it all the time and I learned a lot.

Ian Passmore: What was a musical education like at that time versus what it is today?

David Effron: Most of us, in any musical endeavor, were taught by people who were Europeans. Because of the people who were driven out of their countries, there was a great influx of people coming to the United States at that time. These people had been trained in mostly German speaking countries: Germany, Czechoslovakia, Austria. There were thousands of them who were in music in Europe. Their idea of teaching was—I think I mentioned it—beat the student to a pulp and then pick them up a little, and then stroke them a little (but not too much), and then beat them up again and start over. This was their way of teaching, so that was the way I was taught. Everybody I know was, for the most part. I'm sure there are exceptions; but, we were all taught with that kind of philosophy.

The teacher was God and knew everything. A good teacher would allow the student to express himself more so than other teachers. But, generally, those were the times when the teacher said, "you do it my way or the highway." I didn't have teachers like that, exactly.

My conducting teacher here in Indiana [Tibor Kozma<sup>11</sup>] was kind of like that, but I always felt very comfortable around musicians because I'd grown up with them, so I was never intimidated by anybody. Nobody would defy the teacher. I would never verbally defy the teacher, but I felt from the very beginning, that I knew what was best for me. That doesn't mean they didn't teach me a lot—they did. But after I got to a certain point, I really needed to break out and become my own person.

My teachers allowed me to do that; but I saw with other kids, they didn't. Nowadays we [my contemporaries and I] laugh, because we see everything is stroking and wonderful and “you're the greatest” and “you're going to have a great career.” When they get out in the world, there's this big surprise. They weren't the greatest, or they may have been but there are others that are also the greatest. We never had a false impression of what it was going to be like because the academic world for us was rougher than the profession. I always say, I owe my teacher the biggest compliment because he made me able to go and work at the Cologne Opera, which is a big theater, with all the positive and negative things that are in a theater. He taught me how to never be afraid of anything and do my work. So, I didn't come off exactly as a beginner, even in the beginning, and I owe that to him.

I don't owe much of my technique to him, because he only conducted like this [*demonstrates jerky, unclear conducting pattern*]. But he was a bright man who had a big repertoire. He made a good career for himself. But that kind of conducting, constantly, was not compatible with what I knew I wanted to do.

Ian Passmore: Did you also find that the performance traditions at that time are different than those of today? I know I often listen to recordings from that time and they seem very spontaneous; some people might say “heart on your sleeve” interpretive ideas. Nowadays there seems to be more of a turn towards historical performance practice and things of that nature.

David Effron: That's true. Also, the major change in making music is that the *tempi* have changed. Beethoven used to be slower than it is now,

---

<sup>11</sup> Tibor Kozma (1909-1976); Hungarian conductor; conducting staff, Metropolitan Opera, 1950-57; conducting faculty, Indiana University, 1957-1976.

and I'm thinking of *Leonore*. Not only the slow part, but especially the allegro part, used to be at a *gemutlich* tempo, a tempo that just was comfortable hand-wise. Now sometimes you hear it so fast, to me it's a jolt. Mozart *tempi* have become only fast, I think—faster and faster. In general, music is played faster today. Some of the historical performance things, like with Beethoven *tempi*, that's part of it. Another part, I think perhaps people in our culture can't sit through a long concert. The players, musicians, and conductors understood that, so they slowly migrated to faster *tempi* because, without being explicit, the audience demanded it.

I was told, always end the program with a piece that's really loud and really fast. Don't end with the Brahms Third Symphony, for example. The people who taught us came from a completely different environment. Now, it's two generations past that, so we come to a different way of looking at music. Sometimes it's still a jolt. I try to find new ways of doing things, but I can't quite grasp some of the *tempi* that you hear regularly today. I can't do that; it doesn't mean anything to me.

The role of conductor has changed tremendously. The role of a player has changed tremendously. The role of business in music, obviously, has changed tremendously. A lot of it [was] out of necessity, just to survive. (I think of people who were born in 1900 and lived through two World Wars, that is amazing change—incredible—and I'm talking about nothing compared to that. Since there has been quite a bit of change in our field since I started, it is a jolt. You multiply that by millions of times, people who have lived through trauma their whole lives, it's unbelievable to me, unfathomable.)

Ian Passmore: Tell us a little bit about some of your most influential teachers. They don't necessarily have to be "teachers," per se; they could just be other conductors that you've gotten to observe. Who's made an impact on you?

David Effron: The only teacher I ever studied with was my teacher at IU, because I was getting a degree in conducting. I told you he taught me, as much as one can run into trouble in a theater, you can't be intimidated by it, which I wasn't. He also taught me discipline. I was less disciplined than I should have been in making music for one reason, because it came kind of easy to me compared to some

other guys that I knew, and it was like a game. In a sense, it was always much more of a fun game than responsibility for me, so I had to learn about that responsibility and dedication, which this guy taught me at IU. His name was Tibor Kozma.

He had a terrible temper and he took it out on all the students, all the time. It didn't matter what kind of student. But he had some great, funny lines, which at the time were less than funny, but as years passed they became very funny. He took himself so seriously. For example, in the rehearsals for the opera he once said, "let us do once again letter L, all the musicians and the harpist." That's what he did. He'd say all kinds of things. Every time there was a mistake in the percussion he would say, "what is going on in the kitchen?" He was very funny, but nobody laughed because we were frightened.

Ian Passmore: Too scared...

David Effron: ...to death of this guy. He was a professional with a capital P. He knew the business and he knew the repertoire; he worked at the Met [Metropolitan Opera]. He put the standards they had learned in Budapest and in big opera houses on us, which was beyond us. We didn't know anything, that's why he was so mean. I think he cared. He wasn't just trying to be mean, but he was kind of mean by nature anyhow. He really was.

One day, we were studying *Don Juan* [of Richard Strauss]. So and so got up to conduct it and went [*demonstrates wild, unclear conducting gesture*] and Kozma said, "no, that's not right." Two pianos went splat all over the place and he got mad: "no, no, you didn't conduct that right. Next guy." He went through the whole class; nobody could get it together. So he said, "you are all idiots. You shouldn't be in music. I'll show you how to do it." He got up and he looked at the piano. (He had these protruding eyes that scared the sh\*t out of everybody.) He went like this [*demonstrates loud grunt and wild, unclear conducting gesture*]. It was worse than with any student, and he stopped and he said, "nobody can conduct you idiots." He left the room. [*laughter*]

Another time, I had this friend.... (I just saw him last year in North Carolina; he's still alive.) He was a violinist with the Cleveland Orchestra. He decided he wanted to be a conductor, so he came to

IU. He was older than the rest of us and he didn't play the piano. You had to play the piano to get in this class, and they had some good pianists. I guess by the fact that he had been in the Cleveland Orchestra they let him in, but he didn't play the piano and so he could never be a part of that.

He was a conductor that was better than us. He was older, but Kozma told him, "you must play the piano at least once." We had this idea.... We were doing Brahms Fourth [Symphony], the third movement. He didn't know anything. He knew where the keys were, I guess, but he didn't know much and he certainly couldn't play. So, we taught him to play one note. It went like this [*sings, miming the keyboard part*]. That was all he played, and it comes back a few times (Example 2.1). Kozma said, "good job, George." I don't think he knew that George had only played one note.

Example 2.1: Johannes Brahms, Symphony No. 4, mvmt. III, mm. 1-4

**Allegro giocoso**

The musical score for the first system of Brahms' Symphony No. 4, Movement III, measures 1-4, is as follows:

- Große Flöte** (Large Flute): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Kleine Flöte** (Small Flute): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- 2 Oboen** (2 Oboes): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- 2 Klarinetten in C** (2 Clarinets in C): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- 2 Fagotte** (2 Bassoons): Bass clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Kontrafagott** (Contrabassoon): Bass clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- 4 Hörner** (4 Horns): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes. The parts are labeled "in F<sup>1</sup>" and "in C<sup>3</sup>".
- 2 Trompeten in C** (2 Trumpets in C): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Pauken in F G C** (Kettledrums in F G C): Bass clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Triangel** (Triangle): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- 1. Violine** (1st Violin): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- 2. Violine** (2nd Violin): Treble clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Bratsche** (Viola): Bass clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Violoncell** (Cello): Bass clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.
- Kontrabaß** (Double Bass): Bass clef, 2/4 time signature, playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth and sixteenth notes.

**Allegro giocoso**



Ian Passmore: Ha! Only playing that one thing...

David Effron: Let me say something else about being in this field. If you don't have a sense of humor, you're doomed. Yes, you take it seriously, but you should see the humor in everything. Humor has saved my life in this field and many others will attest to that, because if you take everything so seriously in the music field, it can destroy a human being. I've seen that happen. I decided a long time ago that yes, I'd take it very seriously, but I also see the humor in things and it's helped me get through a lot of stuff, too. Other guys will tell you the same thing.

After [Tibor] Kozma [at Indiana University], I studied for two or three months with this teacher in Germany who was the sweetest man [Wolfgang von der Nahmer].<sup>12</sup> He had a job as first *Kapellmeister* in Dresden during the war, through that whole period. He was what they call a "*routiné*," but in the best sense. I think it has a derogatory meaning, meaning guys who can just go in and conduct anything and it never gets better. It's not artistic, it's perfect; but, it's nothing special except every I is dotted and every T is crossed. He can conduct any piece in the repertoire. You tell him, "what time is it?" "It's twenty of three." "In five minutes, you gotta go and conduct *Wozzeck*." "Okay."

He knew everything, but unlike some of the people I was associated with in Germany at that time, this guy was like an angel. He was the nicest human being. He took a special liking to me and he was a very good teacher. Not an expressive conductor, but I didn't need that. I needed discipline and he was very good for that. He couldn't quite understand why I was emotion-filled.

Twenty years later, when I was conducting in Heidelberg at a summer festival, he came and saw me. He was a very old man then, and I was conducting *Bartered Bride*. There's a lot of this kind of music [*demonstrates jovial, dance-like conducting gestures*], which I guess I just naturally do. He came up to me and he says in German, "now you are playing for the balcony." Meaning I was a show-off and it was not the best compliment, but he never wanted to stop me from being who I was and that's what I

---

<sup>12</sup> Wolfgang von der Nahmer (1906-1988); German conductor and educator; Professor of Conducting at the *Musikhochschule Köln* and First *Kapellmeister* at the *Oper Köln*.

appreciated. He supported a young Jewish-American, who wasn't completely at home in Germany fifteen years after the war, and I'll always appreciate what he did. He taught me about the German theater too, which I didn't know anything about.

Then when I got to [New York] City Opera, these guys you've never heard of had an immense influence on my life. We had an Italian opera conductor [Franco Patané].<sup>13</sup> He was the father of Giuseppe Patané.<sup>14</sup> (You know the name [Giuseppe Patané], probably. He died very young.) His father Franco Patané was the kind of a guy who knew the whole repertoire, especially the Italian operas. You could learn so much from any Italian opera about style, presentation, *tempi*. Anything you wanted to know, he did it perfectly. He conducted always by memory; I never saw him with a score. I guess they thought that I had some talent for Italian opera, which is true. I feel very much at home with that.

I would be the guy that would take over from [Franco] Patané when he left; he would only stay for part of the season. Consequently, I was obligated to go to all of his performances and sit in the pit when I could, because I had to watch everything he did so I could take over. It was easy—anybody could take over from him because he was so clear: nothing unusual. He knew all the special things you did with opera, like where you sub-divided, etc.; there are some difficult passages in [*Madama*] *Butterfly* and *Cavalleria* [*Rusticana*] where they're done a certain way by really good Italian conductors. He taught me all that stuff just by watching.

Places where orchestras would fall apart, they never could because he knew exactly how to beat these sections. Also, a very gentle, shy man; but my God, you give him a baton and he just went up there and did everything. This one time...he was used to a prompter, because that's the Italian system.

Ian Passmore: Just for the sake of clarity, would explain just a little bit about what a prompter is and how that might be different from opera houses in the US?

---

<sup>13</sup> Franco Patané (1908-1968); Italian conductor; conducting staff, New York City Opera; father of conductor Giuseppe Patané.

<sup>14</sup> Giuseppe Patané (1932-1989); Italian conductor; conducting staff, New York City Opera; son of conductor Franco Patané.

David Effron: Sometimes in an opera theater you see a little box, a round box on the stage, and inside this box is somebody with a score of the opera that's being performed, who will help the singers come in on time and throw them word cues, as well as musical entrance cues. In Europe, sometimes—not anymore, today—but it always was, especially in Italy, that they had a prompter for every performance. The prompter had a mirror right outside the prompter's box and when he looked in it, he could see the conductor. He would follow the conductor. The Italian singers basically would rely on the prompter so much that it was as if the prompter was actually conducting the opera, but not his own way, the way the real conductor was doing it.

[Franco] Patané was used to the prompter; that's all he knew. We didn't have a prompter there, so he had to pay much more attention to the stage than he would've been used to. He was magnificent with the orchestra. That was one aspect of his conducting, and the other aspect of his conducting was that he loved the pieces so much that whenever anything went wrong on the stage, he was finished for the night. It does sound like that's not a great conductor, but this wouldn't change. He would be going like this for the next three hours [*buries his head in his left hand, in disappointment*]. He was so sad, I imagine he was crying behind his hand. He just didn't feel comfortable conducting the stage.

Ian Passmore: Because he never had to.

David Effron: No, so he let them go a lot. Then he had this extra thing when it went badly, because... Usually in any opera, there's a place where something bad would happen, where they needed him and he wasn't quite there. One time, we were doing *Tosca*. The first character that comes out is Angelotti and he sings his line, and it's a hard entrance and they were going [*mimics stage action*]. It's like two minutes into the opera, not even that, and he's going along and this guy didn't cue him, and the guy wasn't the greatest musician so he didn't come in right. For the rest of the opera, he's conducting like this [*buries his head in his left hand, in disappointment*]. He didn't even have his eyes open. But he was great.

That's what I learned. The other stuff I could learn from other people. The most I ever learned about theater in general was from

our General Director Julius Rudel, who knew every aspect of the theater up to the point where “the nail goes in the scenery at this point; no, not lower—right there.” He could also direct. He was not the greatest conductor hand-wise; but my God, he was the greatest theater conductor, because he could take a piece of sh\*t and make it into the most exciting piece you ever heard in your life.

He was that way with everything and that was his gift. Plus, he was a terrific administrator. With the exception of very few people, I’ve been lucky that I’ve worked for people who were honest and fair, and you knew where you stood. That’s all that people wish for. They want to know what the parameters are of this job so that if something goes over the line and you do something wrong, you know it because you knew it before you did it. He was that way. He was completely fair and everybody knew where they stood, and it was the happiest... There will never be another company like the City Opera in those days because the leadership was so phenomenal. We would die for this guy—all of us, not just me.

He taught me more about theater and about putting things together in a quick way because we never had any time. But he knew how to do that and people really respected him. He knew how to be friendly or not friendly. He knew exactly, with everybody, how to act so that you felt comfortable and it was professionally perfect. It was really unusual.

Ian Passmore: Was it an offer from New York City Opera? Was that what brought you back to the States from Europe?

David Effron: Yeah, and I had to audition for the job. Julius [Rudel] was auditioning me. He was conducting in Hamburg, I think, so I had to make a trip up to Hamburg. But, I got in a terrible traffic jam and I missed the audition. His wife was there and she said, “he’ll be back in six hours, if you want to wait,” and I waited, thank God. He came back and then he was rushed. The audition went fast; it was obvious I could play, so I got the job.

Ian Passmore: Did you notice much of a difference between your training in Europe and your training in the States?

David Effron: I didn’t have so much training in Europe because I was only at the *Hochschule* for a couple months or three, maybe. Then, my training in this country was led by Europeans or people who had

been trained by Europeans. They trained in the European system; basically, they were gods and we were nothing, and we were going to be burned at the stake if we did anything that they didn't want us to. I will say that working in America was different than working in Germany, because the culture there is so square and everything has its place. Whereas here, the music-making is a lot freer, and you maintain your individuality much more than you do in Germany. I guess that would fall under the heading of "performance practice."

Ian Passmore: You were a coach and a staff conductor at City Opera, correct?

David Effron: Yep!

Ian Passmore: What was your first job as either a symphonic staff conductor, or more importantly, your first position as Music Director?

David Effron: First of all, at City Opera I evolved from rehearsal pianist to only playing for the General Director's rehearsals, to Chorus Master with conducting, to more conducting, to leaving and coming back as a guest conductor for eight years. I really ran the whole gamut. (For photos of David Effron in performance with the New York City Opera, please see Figures 4 and 5 in Appendix C.)

Ian Passmore: You rose through the ranks.

David Effron: More or less, yeah. I guess at [the] Curtis [Institute of Music] I was assistant to Max Rudolph, but I had my own concerts and operas. The first time where I had responsibility [as chief orchestra conductor/teacher] was at [the] Eastman [School of Music], where I really was the person.

Ian Passmore: You were the boss.

David Effron: Yeah. In a way, even at City Opera, if you have your own opera, which I did after a while, I was the boss then. Nobody came and told me how to conduct or anything like that. I think where I had the responsibilities of a Music Director, as much as that can be said in an academic setting, was at Eastman. I think, when I was conductor in Youngstown, Ohio—which actually presented a lot of issues because of personalities on the Board and past history and so forth—I managed to fix a lot of things there. I was happy about that.

Since that time, from Eastman on, I've been my own boss.

Ian Passmore: Concurrent with your various conducting appointments, you continued working as a pianist, coach, and accompanist. Who were some of the notable artists that you've collaborated with?

David Effron: I should say that up until 1995, I could be considered a pianist. After 1995, for the next five years, I did less and less playing. By the time I got to the turn of the century, it more or less stopped. I don't consider myself a pianist good enough to say I'm a pianist right now, but yes, I was. I played a lot in Europe for people. You don't know their names, but they were little starlets in opera houses like Cologne and so forth.

When I came back home, the first person I played for was George London.<sup>15</sup> That was a funny story. Somebody had recommended me to Columbia Artists to go out as an accompanist, and so one day I got a call. I didn't even know I was on their list. They said, "George London needs a pianist for a Florida tour in three weeks. Would you be interested?" Yes, I was interested. "Well you have to go over to George's house and audition." "Okay, fine." He lived on the East Side, they said be there at four o'clock. I'm there at four o'clock. This ragged man comes to the door, opens the door, and he has on his pajamas. I'm saying, "it's four o'clock, man." "Come in, come in." I sit down at the piano. First thing on this program is a... I don't know what it was, but it was a very simple accompaniment. I played. He said, "good, good. Next." "You ever play any opera?" "Yeah, a lot." "Okay, I'm doing this aria. Can you play it?" "Yeah." "Okay, let's hear it." "Okay, that's enough. Next." He said, "okay, okay. You got the job."

He called Columbia; I got the job. I hadn't done any of this stuff; I was pretty naïve. Next, we flew down to Florida together. I was really frightened of flying, so I was like this [*imitates tense, uncomfortable, nervous behavior*] and the guy said, "remind me next time, don't sit with you. You're ruining my whole week." Then we went down there and we stayed in this hotel. Got down there a couple days early and I spent the whole day, twelve hours each day, practicing for this. I knew the stuff [music] when I left

---

<sup>15</sup> George London (1920-1985); American concert and operatic bass-baritone. Established the George London Foundation for [young opera] Singers in 1971.

New York. Somebody found me a church to practice in, and I didn't see George London at all because he was sleeping most of the time.

Then it got time, we were going to meet. They were going to pick us up at a certain time for the concert, so I started to get dressed and I realized I'd never worn a tux before. I'd just gotten to New York and I didn't know how to put it on, the little things. I didn't know what to do, so I went and knocked on George's door, and he came in his pajamas and it was like 10 minutes before. I said, "Mr. London, excuse me, but can you help me get this stuff on?" He said, "What? You don't know how to do that?" I said, "no." He said, "well it's a good thing you can play the piano because you can't do anything else. You can't fly, you can't put on your tux."

Ian Passmore: Can't dress yourself—ha!

David Effron: So, he helped me and then we went to the concert. I was really nervous to be playing for George London. Oh, we rehearsed once. I was ready to rehearse for hours, but he didn't want to rehearse. I was so nervous that I forgot to give the page turner the music for the first number. I walked out there and I looked at the stand, and I realized there wasn't any music. He's talking to the audience. I say, "Mr. London, Mr. London." Finally, he said, "Yes, David, what do you want?" I said, "I forgot the music." He went, "Oh, no." I went back and I got the music. It's a wonder the guy let me play for him. I played for him a few times after that. We became good friends and really good colleagues, and he had great stories. So, I played for him.

While I was at City Opera, I played for a number of artists. I played for [Placido] Domingo.<sup>16</sup> I played for Sherrill Milnes.<sup>17</sup> I played once for somebody who was on the faculty here named Gianna D'Angelo.<sup>18</sup> She did sing a lot of stuff. I played for a

---

<sup>16</sup> Placido Domingo (b. 1941); Spanish tenor, conductor, and arts administrator. One of The Three Tenors, alongside Jose Carreras and the late Luciano Pavarotti. As of 2017, he is General Director of the Los Angeles Opera.

<sup>17</sup> Sherrill Milnes (b. 1935); American baritone noted for his performances of Verdi. Closely associated with the Metropolitan Opera from 1965-1997.

<sup>18</sup> Gianna D'Angelo (1929-2013); American coloratura soprano; voice faculty, Indiana University, 1970-1997.

number of people who were very good, not necessarily famous, but I made extra money doing that.

Then, when I went to Philadelphia, Benita Valente,<sup>19</sup> who I had met once—didn't know her—needed a pianist and I had a really good reputation as a pianist, so she asked me if I'd be interested and I worked with her some. I spent the next ten years playing for her all over the world. Boy, I learned more about music in one way from her than anybody. She was the most spontaneous singer. We did the same repertoire many times; I don't remember one concert that was like any other concert, and for that I was really good because I can follow. I knew that it would never be the same, but it was always incredibly interesting. To do a simple piece, for example, fifty times, differently, and still make it incredibly interesting... That's what I learned from her about being a real musician.

She was hard on me because she wanted perfection, real perfection. Sometimes she would do something in a rehearsal, I wouldn't catch it and she'd come down hard on me. The first time, I said, "well yeah, but we didn't do it that way yesterday." That was the worst thing you could say to somebody like that. I understand that now because I've evolved into somebody like that myself. I learned so much from her and we became very, very dear friends—her whole family and me. I talked to her a couple weeks ago. We had some funny incidents on the road.

I would get upset or nervous about any little thing and she wasn't that way. She calmed me down. I was a lot like her husband that way, so she was used to it. When I got to know her, she wasn't always calm inside, but the outer was like Madonna. We went to a movie once; we'd try to go always a day before the concert. We had a concert in Boston, we went a day early and we went to the movies. She said to me all of a sudden in the middle of the movie, "Hey David." "What is it?" "Will you change seats with me?" "Yeah, but why?" She said, "The guy next to me is touching me all over. Will you change seats?" "Yeah sure. That's terrible." I changed seats, ten minutes later, "Hey Benita." "What is it?" "Will you change seats? He's doing the same with me."

---

<sup>19</sup> Benita Valente (b. 1934); American soprano known for her performances of opera, *lieder*, chamber music, and oratorio.



All those fun times in the kind of situation where it's very serious. You have to be ready, you have to be serious, you have to be focused; and then something like that happens. It's quite funny to us, and the combination is really what makes this life so great.

Ian Passmore: Even when you're working or when you have a serious relationship with someone, it's important to maintain your sense of humor.

David Effron: For sure.

Ian Passmore: Let's discuss your early and developing perspectives on academia.

David Effron: Oh, you don't want to do that. *[laughter]*

Ian Passmore: Well I'm just going to start by saying... By now we know you've held conducting and teaching positions at three of the country's—if not the world's—most revered conservatories: The Curtis Institute in Philadelphia, The Eastman School [of Music] in Rochester [NY], and the Jacobs School [of Music] at Indiana [University], here in Bloomington. In hindsight, what were the major differences in working and teaching at those various institutions?

David Effron: The sizes of those schools are very different, and a lot of things that happen are influenced or are controlled by the size of the school. Curtis is a very small student body comprised of the best young musicians in the world. They're all ahead of their time. Some are prodigies, but everybody is very efficient. It's a teaching school obviously; there's a lot to learn. But, it's not a teaching school where you're teaching all kinds of levels simultaneously, like you do in a big university.

Eastman was something like that. It also had its prodigies and some very gifted people. The academics at Eastman, since it was a university, the University of Rochester, were very, very important. At Curtis, they're important too, but they're not emphasized as much as the music element of it. At IU, it's the same thing where the academics are important, and my perception of this place was that they're able to tailor the academic situation for an individual any way they want to tailor it. In other words, say such and such is required to get a degree.... At Indiana, I've seen where yes, it's required, but this guy doesn't have to do it; and he has to do this,

but not this. Because they tailor it to each individual. I don't know what it's based on, I have no clue, but I do know it's flexible in that way. I don't know if it's good or bad, but I know that it's very different than most universities.

I would say the challenges for molding a musician are greater here, because it's such a huge school and you have many, many different levels. You want to make it a good experience for the least experienced person and you want to make it a good experience for the most experienced person. That's hard to think about and plan because there's so big of a gap.

At Eastman, it was more even and so it was more of a challenge than Curtis, because at Curtis you have people that they all thought they knew more than whoever was leading them. My advantage there was, oddly enough, that I was close to their age when I started at Curtis, so there was a camaraderie. That and I guess they liked my work, too. They weren't afraid to speak up, except to Mr. [Eugene] Ormandy;<sup>20</sup> they wouldn't say anything to him.

I found that education in the time which spans from 1970 to 2016, education has changed. Not only music education, but education in general. The role of the student has changed. The work ethic of the students has changed considerably. What schools promote as good teaching has changed. I alluded to that when I said there comes a time where everybody is being patted on the head and told they're the greatest. That's what I mean. If you got even a pat, that was a rare thing in Curtis and Eastman.

Since that time, since about 1990, '95 to now, things have changed a lot. Students have changed a lot. The relationship with students has changed a lot. I lived through all that. For the teacher who started in 1970, it's an adjustment.

Ultimately, the three schools cannot be compared. They're three distinct schools that don't operate in the same way, so you can't really compare them. You take each of them on its own merit.

---

<sup>20</sup> Eugene Ormandy (1899-1985); Hungarian conductor; Music Director, Philadelphia Orchestra, 1938-1980.

Ian Passmore: In addition to those three schools, you've held various summer conducting positions. I know in Heidelberg and the Brevard Music Center in North Carolina, just to name two. What were your titles and duties with those and how have these summer music opportunities, like Aspen and Tanglewood, how has their value changed over time for students?

David Effron: Students, by the nature of summer music festivals—and the fact you're working with a lot of new people that you don't see during the winter, wherever you are—those are great opportunities, because the most improvement as a musician that can be done is done during the summer. I see tremendous changes in people who attended major summer festivals. They come back to their regular schools, and just by the fact that they've associated with different teachers, gotten different viewpoints among like students with the same goals... The fact that it's summer and it's a little bit freer and it's more fun than going to school. That really helps people to improve, and I notice that. I feel I gained a lot from going to Aspen as a student, and when I went to Aspen as an assistant on the faculty. Those summers were invaluable for me.

I imagine for other students, too. You listen to the way they talk amongst each other and how valuable they've been. The first job I had where I was really the head of something in the summer was the Merola program in the San Francisco Opera, which is for very, very gifted singers. Hard to get into and an extensive program in which everybody works very hard. I was the head of that for two years and I would have gone back, but I got a job at the Heidelberg Music Festival.

The way I got it was that they needed to hire an orchestra and my very astute, very bright dean, Robert Freeman,<sup>21</sup> found that out; and through him, the Eastman Orchestra became the orchestra of the festival. I was the General Director of the festival for ten years, I think. Then I was in Chautauqua, where I was head of the student orchestra, and conducted the main orchestra and some opera, as well.

---

<sup>21</sup> Robert Freeman (b. 1935); American pianist, musicologist, and educator/administrator; Dean, Eastman School of Music, 1972-1996.

Then Brevard for eleven years, where I was the head of the whole thing. (For a photo of David Effron in performance with the Brevard Music Center Orchestra, please see Figure 6 in Appendix C.) It was good, the transitions, because I started with working with fewer people and ended up always with more people and thus more responsibility. It went in the right direction, so I learned a lot from each job, especially the aspect of handling people. If I want to do it, I can be very good at it. If I don't care, I can be very bad at it, but I learned all of these things mostly through work at summer festivals. I recommend that all students try to get into summer festivals.

Ian Passmore: Holding these professional and academic appointments, especially those that you held simultaneously... You mentioned that unless you've got a really high paying professional job with a really high-level orchestra, you may not be making enough money to live on, especially if you have a family and that sort of thing. I think that's still true today. There are a lot of professional musicians...

David Effron: It's truer today.

Ian Passmore: I know some that hold two, three, four different jobs. What advice do you have for them? How did you balance the workload?

David Effron: I don't know. I'm a workaholic. I loved what I was doing. When you love what you're doing, you can work more.

Ian Passmore: It doesn't seem like work.

David Effron: No, it doesn't seem like work and you don't count the hours because they go by very fast. I was very fortunate: I was always working. I never had a money issue. I don't know what that is, except my heart goes out to so many students when I hear stories you couldn't make up. They're so sad about not having enough money for this, for that, and the other thing. I've never had that issue, so I've been very fortunate. Once I drove a cab for three months, the only time I didn't have work; and that was also one of the most valuable lessons I learned. To have a real job, is hard. It's the hardest job I ever had. You had to drive the morning rush hour and the evening rush hour, in order to make any money, in Washington D.C., which is no easy town to drive in.

Boy, that was rough. I would be so exhausted. One of my friends used to say, “I’d rather conduct *Wozzeck* and [*Der*] *Rosenkavalier* in one evening, than drive a cab.” It was harder driving a cab, just exhausting. Not to mention the interesting people—some nice, some less nice—that you would meet. I can only express sympathy for people that have to struggle in anything. I just was very fortunate I never had anything like that.

Anything about me wouldn’t be complete unless I mention that the hardest thing about this field is balancing a personal life and a professional life. I think I’ve talked about that. I was really pretty good balancing the professional life and not so great with any kind of balance in my personal life. I was married a number of times. I have a number of children and some of them are estranged, some aren’t. I still have never had money problems, even though at times I came close, because of having to pay child support and alimony.

You asked why I took Eastman or why I went into academia. The real answer of why I went into it was I always was fearful of getting work in the profession. I always got work, but I was always afraid that down the road I won’t get any. That’s the fear of every professional musician. I knew in a school I’d be having a paycheck every month and I needed that paycheck in order to pay alimony and child support, and that’s why I took the job. That’s the truth. That doesn’t sound very romantic, but that is the truth.

I would caution anybody who goes into this field, especially as a performer, to think very hard about what your life is going to be with a partner if you’re never at home. You’re very lonely if you’re a conductor. All conductors are lonely, it’s a lonely life. How can build a family if you’re not really at home very much? All those things are really important and I, like many of my colleagues, didn’t consider any of that. I didn’t even think about it. “Oh, I’m married now. Okay, I’ll be home in a couple of months.” It doesn’t work that way, which we all know, but I was too stupid to know at that time and made many mistakes in that area. Every mistake you learn something from, and my only sorrow is that I didn’t learn quick enough because it—my stupidity—impacted a lot of people, including myself.

That’s the thing that you have to think about very hard before you commit to a relationship. How much this profession eats you up

and how much time it requires. I don't know if you're going to put that down, but it's true.

Ian Passmore: I think it's just as valuable as anything else.

David Effron: The fact that I'm so personal. Nobody talks about it.

## Chapter 3: On Conducting

Ian Passmore: What is your personal philosophy when it comes to conducting, or perhaps another way of asking that might be, what are the conductor's chief responsibilities, in your mind?

David Effron: There are many chief responsibilities—there's not one chief responsibility because if you are paying a lot of attention to something that's very important like balance, for example. Say you're paying attention to balance, but you're not paying attention to intonation. Then you've really failed as a conductor because there are many different things that need to be cared for simultaneously. My philosophy, as far as conducting, is that first of all, you should have a clear technique as far as your hands are concerned. That is just a very simple part of it. I see a lot of people with clear technique.

What I'm mostly interested in is what one can do to influence their orchestra to play the way they want them to play as far as sound, as far as interpretation, as far as musical values. When you've conquered those (at least as much as possible) elements of conducting, then you really are a conductor. And for so many people, it's an age of technique. Fifty years ago, it wasn't only technique. Technique was taught in classes and in lessons, but it wasn't the whole lesson. The major part of a lesson, or a major part of a seminar was what you bring to the music, and how you do that physically to influence people to do what you want them to do musically. That's my philosophy for, let's call it the "total" conductor.

Ian Passmore: Do you think those responsibilities change or adapt at all, either the musical side of conducting or just the physical act of conducting? Does that change depending on whether you're working with a professional group or a college group?

David Effron: It indeed changes. Not only that, but it changes from professional orchestra to another professional orchestra. Basic moves, basic conducting, are generally the same for everybody, but within that there's a lot of variety. It's the variety that changes a lot, depending on what kind of group you're standing before. If you take your example—take a less experienced orchestra—your

approach really has to be like somebody who is a guide going up Mount Everest, taking every little step with care, with clarity, and with great explanation. Inexperienced people need that kind of thing.

On the other side of the coin, you have a professional orchestra. Within that, there are also levels, but if you have the highest professional orchestra, you are basically part of the fabric and not the guide who's leading the people up the mountain. Then there's all these things in between. There are two examples. So yes, things change all the time. The other thing about change is that sometimes if you're aware that you have to change, and you know the type of orchestra you're going to conduct. Sometimes when you begin conducting that orchestra, you find they need something else other than what you had planned, and that sense takes a lot of time and experience to develop.

It's important that you take very good care to have all these varieties, depending on what kind of group you're conducting, in your hip pocket so you can pull them out when you need them. The idea of adapting to something that's needed from the orchestra—and changes maybe many times during a concert, even—that takes time and experience. You can't expect the young person to just know that, because in general, there are so many different things that you have to pay attention to.

When you begin conducting and you hear that big sound coming towards you, it's a shock. I know from my own experience, but I also know from young students telling me this. So, it takes time to get used to that. It's like learning anything; and the end result, if you really want to be a conductor, is all these possibilities that exist in music-making, and one has to adapt to that at any given moment.

Ian Passmore: Speaking of having to adapt your musical ideas to the situation, or your physical ideas to the situation, how do you think your responsibilities as a conductor might adapt based on if you're doing purely symphonic conducting, versus a concerto, or even an opera?

David Effron: Those three genres have different things that are needed. Obviously, an opera has many people that you're responsible for;



not only the orchestra, but the singers on stage. If you're working on a large stage, you have a lot of space they can be singing over; on the left, far away from you, or on the right, close to you. You have to adapt your technique, as well as adapting your sight, so you can be aware where the singers are, and what you want to do with your technique. You generally have to conduct larger motions with opera because it's spread out.

With a concerto, that's different too. Your job, as I see it, is to basically buy into the interpretation of the soloist and be like a magic carpet on which the soloist can just play. You play along the magic carpet—you *are* the magic carpet—and you adapt to the soloist. In those kinds of things, you don't beat big; because, the larger you beat, the more difficult it is to go from large to another kind of beat if you have to. I just came from a festival where I heard a soloist play a Liszt piano concerto. (I was grateful I wasn't conducting.) All of a sudden at the end, this fellow took off twice as fast as the piece generally goes; just in an instant, he took off.

Now if you're the conductor, your mindset in a concerto is, "be prepared for anything, and listen." You have to listen very carefully. Good for this conductor who was doing the Liszt piano concerto because he adapted very quickly, and he just went with the guy and averted a disaster. It should have fallen apart—it was that much of a difference—but it didn't. So, your job is to listen very intensely and be ready for anything. In a symphony setting, very seldom does something happen where you have to adapt. And then you have much more leeway with a symphony orchestra to give your own ideas to them, and for them be able to play the way you want them to play. Whereas in opera, there are so many kinds of possibilities where you have to adapt to singers. Maybe on Tuesday night they want to sing a little faster, then Wednesday night they want to sing a little slower.

If you're a good opera conductor, you have to make a decision immediately about what you are going to do. Are you going to force the singer to do the tempo that they sang on Tuesday if they don't want to on Wednesday, or for the sake of the art form and the performance, are you going to allow them that leeway? You have to allow them leeway because the voice is part of the human body. They can only do how they feel that evening. And I'm not talking about huge differences in tempi, but some subtle differences.

People say that it's easier to conduct symphony than opera. I think they both have their issues, and they're both equally problematic. You have to have a tremendous amount of flexibility to do opera. There are some very good symphony conductors who are not successful in opera because they're used to doing what they want to do. And they get to an opera, where you have to be very flexible, and they're not able to do that. I feel very lucky that I had the opportunity to do both symphony and opera.

Ian Passmore: We'll come back to this later when we're talking about rehearsing, score study, etc. But, I would imagine a lot of that listening and flexibility comes easier depending on how well you've studied a piece or how many times you've done it, because that really frees you up physically.

David Effron: Well, a lot of time was spent with my teacher [Tibor Kozma] on always being prepared, actually here at Indiana University. This was told to us all the time. By preparation, I mean to the point where you really know what instrument is playing at any time, and you could basically conduct the piece without a score. My teacher never accepted anything other than that, because it wasn't considered "prepared." As you so correctly said, the more you're prepared, the more you can deal with the flexibility that's necessary.

Otherwise, you see conductors with their heads in the score, they never look up. And as you say, then you don't have the contact with the players as you would otherwise. Frankly, I'd be scared sh\*tless if I didn't know a piece. I've been very lucky. I don't think I was ever unprepared, but I've seen people unprepared. I don't know how they have not only the audacity, but the guts to get up there and not be prepared, because you're not doing your job and it's risky. And it's certainly no fun, and it should be fun.

Ian Passmore: There's a really obvious disconnect that any decent orchestra can pick up on very, very quickly.

David Effron: Within two measures...

Ian Passmore: ...if the conductor doesn't know what he or she's doing.

David Effron: Right. And let me just add one more thing: I've seen a lot of conductors who know how the piece goes, but they don't have

ideas about what they want from the piece. They give a generic kind of presentation all the time.

Ian Passmore: Something they've heard off a bunch of different recordings.

David Effron: Exactly.

Ian Passmore: I call it a "copy and paste" interpretation, where they've taken all their favorite moments from their favorite recordings and called that their own interpretation.

David Effron: That's exactly right.

Ian Passmore: Just one of the dangers of so many recordings.

David Effron: I agree with you. Actually, my training was never to listen to recordings. I listen to recordings with a new piece to make sure I'm kind of on the right track as far as tempo and balances. After many, many, many years of doing this, you are on the right track—seldom am I not on the right track. Many musicians aren't aware that it takes years to develop all the things you need to be comfortable and to be credible. That's what conducting is.

I've talked to many audience members and they honestly think you just get up there at the first rehearsal, and you wave your arms in some form or another and everything's perfect. That's what they think. Because the baton doesn't make any sound, there's no way to tell. If a violinist plays really bad, most people can know that it's bad, but with conducting it's very nebulous; you don't really know. Musicians know, or other conductors know, probably.

Ian Passmore: What are the different responsibilities in your mind, at the professional level, between a Music Director, versus a staff conductor, versus a guest conductor of a professional orchestra?

David Effron: Well, on one hand they all have the same responsibility—to do the piece the best they can and bring something to the piece. The differences don't come so much in the conducting. The differences come in the relationship to the orchestra: whether you talk to the orchestra, or whether you talk to individual members, or not. For example, a guest conductor is only there for a short amount of time. You want to get intimate with the players, musically—as do

the main conductor and the assistant—but you don't have time to be very personal with them. You just don't.

Any good conductor can influence an orchestra. For example, they talk about the sound of an orchestra. "This orchestra has a certain sound." Now there are many different ideas of what sound should be played by an orchestra. If a guest conductor comes in, and the Music Director has trained these people to play with a certain sound, the guest conductor can influence the sound in a week's time so that it's different. That's his or her choice to do. I think it's also a lot more relaxed between the players and the conductor when you're a guest because, like it or not, the Music Director is your boss. And when you're working with your boss for a two-and-a-half-hour rehearsal, it's human nature to feel...

Ian Passmore: A little more pressure.

David Effron: ...a bit on edge, because that person can influence your career. The Assistant Conductor needs to be as prepared musically as the other two guys; but since he's not the boss, he doesn't have the power to really influence.

The role of the Assistant Conductor... Psychologically and unconsciously, his relationship with the players is very different. That person, the Assistant Conductor, can't influence their careers. Usually, the Assistant Conductor is conducting repertoire that, for want of a better word, perhaps isn't as "serious" as the "masterworks" concerts as they're called. Because of that, I always say that the best position the Assistant Conductor can take is be friendly. I mean, not overly friendly—you don't go kiss the clarinetist—but friendly, and prepared, and demanding, but in a very mild manner, and let them out early.

Strange thing: the orchestra will always appreciate getting out early. And I've seen them turn on a dime. They didn't like a conductor for some reason or another, and then that conductor let them out early. They came back saying how great the conductor was. People are very strange, but something like that is predictable. So, when you let somebody out ten minutes early, you gain something. Also, the Assistant Conductor often has a tendency to talk about the main conductor or get involved in other orchestra drama.

If the Assistant Conductor is on the staff permanently and lives there, he's going to hear a lot of things about the main conductor, negative and not too much positive, because the players need to vent. Who better to vent to than the Assistant Conductor? It's a very hard position. In some ways it's harder than the main conductor because you have to be very clever, not commit yourself to an opinion that might be derogatory and get back to somebody. It's very, very difficult. The Assistant Conductor is usually a younger person who's trying to build his or her career and who's using the orchestra to help that. So how one is viewed in that position can very much influence the future of the Assistant Conductor.

Everybody that I know says, "oh, I love to guest conduct." Why? One, no responsibility except the same musical responsibilities. Two, it's a short time period of a week. Three, you're almost always a hero. Because that's the way people are—they always like the guest conductor more than the Music Director, because the Music Director influences their careers. Do any of those folks conduct differently? No. Most of it has to do with the way you appear and the personal relationships.

Ian Passmore: You spoke about an orchestra's unique sound. At present, Music Directors spend less time with their home orchestras. The idea of an orchestra's individual sound is going away because we don't have this "[Herbert von] Karajan<sup>22</sup> sound" with Berlin [Philharmonic], or the "[Leopold] Stokowski<sup>23</sup> sound" in Philadelphia [Orchestra] anymore, because those orchestras are seeing a different conductor for basically every concert. Do you think that's true? Are there pros and cons to that?

David Effron: I do think this element of the music business has changed, and I admire a conductor who will stay with the orchestra for many weeks, because that's the only way to make your orchestra better if you're a Music Director. And if you're not there on-site, that's really hard to do. So yes, I think people suffer. But I also recognize that in today's musical world, the emphasis is on career, career,

---

<sup>22</sup> Herbert von Karajan (1908-1989); Austrian conductor; Principal Conductor, Berlin Philharmonic, 1954-1989.

<sup>23</sup> Leopold Stokowski (1882-1977); English conductor; Music Director, Philadelphia Orchestra, 1912-1938.

career, and not building an orchestra. People say they want to build an orchestra, but one of the ways to do that is to be on-site for many weeks. I admire Jimmy [James] Levine so much from the standpoint that he *made* that MET [Metropolitan Opera] Orchestra.<sup>24</sup> How did he do it? Because he was with it all the time.

You have to admire that. That's the proof of the pudding that if you stay with your orchestra, you're going to influence them. And another example is Leonard Slatkin, who has stayed with the Detroit Symphony.<sup>25</sup> He's a big influence and that orchestra has gotten better. It's a question for conductors who are building careers, because you can't turn down guest conducting and expect to have a career. You can't stay with one the whole time. The examples I gave were really exceptions. Of course, these guys are influenced by that desire to further their careers, so they're not with their orchestras like it used to be many, many years ago.

Ian Passmore: Speaking of this idea of the role of the Music Director. Do you think that particular role has changed over the course of your career? If so, has that affected your approach to the job...the responsibilities, or the amount of control or power a Music Director has?

David Effron: There's no doubt. I'll speak about fifty years ago, as that's what I'm most familiar with. There's no doubt that things have changed. Fifty years ago, the conductor's only responsibility, for the most part, was to conduct the orchestra, make it better, and occasionally go to an after-concert party. But things have changed, and they've changed because there are less concert-goers. So, you want the person who's at the helm to try to get bigger audiences. That person now is requested and almost must attend more parties and other social events.

There were conductors who never went to any social event and nobody said anything, but nowadays they're obligated to go to social events, meet people, have many, many interviews, have many lunches and dinners with people who are prospective donors.

---

<sup>24</sup> James Levine (b. 1943); American conductor; Music Director, Metropolitan Opera, 1976-2016; Music Director, Boston Symphony Orchestra, 2004-2011.

<sup>25</sup> Leonard Slatkin (b. 1944); American conductor; Music Director, Detroit Symphony Orchestra, 2008-2018; Music Director, National Symphony Orchestra, 1996-2008; Music Director, St. Louis Symphony Orchestra, 1979-1996;

That element of the organization has come into the conductor's life. In addition, nothing has changed as far as building an orchestra, studying your scores, being prepared, having rehearsal. That's all the same. So that was a full-time job, and now you add it to this new, other full-time job. That doesn't leave a lot of time for anything. I just want to say that that's the way the business is. I don't have any opinion about it. I know the conductors in general aren't happy about that kind of thing. Everybody's willing to help their organization, but a point for us is, to what extent should we do other activities than music? So yes, things have changed.

Ian Passmore: Did you find yourself "pleasantly immune" to that, since you spent a lot of your career in academia?

David Effron: I march to my own drummer—that was my career. In retrospect, there were good things about it, and there were things that kept my career back, because in marching to my own drummer, I didn't necessarily want to do these things. When I was a Music Director, or when I was the head of an opera company, I kind of did them, but not whole heartedly. I often said, "I can't go tonight because I got to study." Well nobody cares, and nobody even knows what that means. I kind of shot myself in the foot with that element, but like I say, I can always look in the mirror. I don't owe anybody anything. I don't know if that's good or bad, but I can tell you that it set back my career. There was no question about that.

On the other hand, I would have been totally unhappy if I did fifty percent music and fifty percent socializing. I would have been unhappy. So one has to make that choice, and I made that choice a long time ago, and I never strayed from it. When I was Music Director in Youngstown [Symphony, in Youngstown, OH], people were always happy with that element. But they weren't terribly happy that I didn't live there, and they weren't terribly happy that I sometimes didn't go to their parties.

In Central City Opera [Central City, CO], which I ran, they were very happy with the progress of the festival, but they weren't totally happy with the fact that I didn't show too much interest in participating. That doesn't mean I wouldn't do anything. I would, because I wanted to help the organization. But the conductor is always somebody who people hold in high esteem, and they want

to mingle with that person. I understand all that, I'm just not cut out for it.

Ian Passmore: Some people aren't.

David Effron: Right. But today, you have to do it. When I was younger, you could get away with not doing it.

Ian Passmore: Now it's built into the fabric of the job.

David Effron: It's built into the contract, yeah.

Ian Passmore: You had once told me that some conductors, yourself included, are just simply more capable of getting an orchestra to respond to them than others. What did you mean by that, and why do you think that happens for a select few conductors?

David Effron: Well, I'm sorry I said that because it sounds very arrogant. But basically, I've had very good luck in getting orchestras to do what I want them to do sound-wise, phrase-wise, musically-wise. If you ask me how you do that, I don't know the answer to that. I just know that I feel that that's part of my job and I happen to be good at it. One thing that will help is how well you hear. I know it sounds arrogant again, but I'll say it anyhow. I have really good ears.

I can hear things that not everybody can. If the third kazoo is playing out of tune, I can hear it and those things help when they come naturally. Every orchestra I've conducted, there's been some comment about, "God, this guy has really good ears." When I conducted Pittsburgh [Symphony], they said, "he hears just as well as [Lorin] Maazel,"<sup>26</sup> who had phenomenal ears. I owe that to somebody, maybe God, that I was born that way. I have perfect pitch and some people don't have good pitch, and so you can't get them to do what you want because you can't explain it, or you don't hear it yourself.

---

<sup>26</sup> Lorin Maazel (1930-2014); American conductor and violinist. A child prodigy renowned for his baton technique and photographic memory, Maazel went on to serve as Music Director of the Cleveland Orchestra, Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra, Bavarian Radio Symphony Orchestra, and the New York Philharmonic.



Then there are conductors who were amazing: Maazel was one of them. There's plenty of conductors who are able to get an orchestra to do things. Also, it's by will. If you want them to play soft, as an example, badly enough, you can get them to do it. If you want them to play soft, but what level of soft? You aren't sure. You can't get them below a certain level, because you don't really want it badly enough. I learned a long time ago that when I'm in front of an orchestra, if I really want something to happen, generally it will happen. I tell the players—especially in a school situation (I would not say it in a professional situation)—"how important is it to you to play that passage a certain way?" "How badly do you want it to be the way that you want it?"

That kind of focus that I'm able to develop has helped me and other conductors too.

Ian Passmore: To what extent do you still have to practice the physical act of conducting, if at all?

David Effron: That's a good question. Young people, myself included [*laughter*], always practiced the physical aspect of conducting—mostly, the physical aspect of the arms. I don't think I ever practiced until I discovered that there were certain motions in my body that helped. But I haven't "practiced," per se, for years, except in a difficult contemporary piece or some tricky thing in a standard piece, or something in a piece that I haven't conducted. They'll be isolated phrases, isolated sections that one has to (or at least I do) look at outside, without the sound. But I know what I want to do, and then I practice it. Otherwise, I don't.

If you practice body motion, that's not good. I don't think that's good, because it's all spontaneous. It should be spontaneous. One of the things that I do as a conductor... (I'm not aware of these things. Most of these things I'm telling you, that refer to me, were told to me by players many times so I figure, "well, there's enough people that said it, so it might be true.") I'm so expressive with my body and I move a lot, just generally. Evidently that movement telegraphs something to the players.

I tell my students, "whatever you do don't look like me when you conduct," because I have an unusual way of doing it, but it works for me. Do I think about it anymore? No. For years, I haven't

thought about it because it became a part of me. And every conductor who conducts for their whole life, will figure that out. In that respect, conducting becomes easier. Score study becomes easier. But I would say that anybody who goes home in front of a mirror and says, “okay, when I get to bar forty-six, I’m going to put my arm up like this, or scratch my head, or do something.” That doesn’t make any sense because it’s a spontaneous art.

Ian Passmore: We mentioned score study, which we’ll get to later. But we also talked about freeing yourself up physically, the better you know the piece.

David Effron: Yeah, because then it’s natural.

Ian Passmore: But when it’s a younger, inexperienced conductor, who doesn’t necessarily know what their own technique is yet, would you ever recommend that a young conductor “choreograph,” [physical gestures]?

David Effron: I would, because then it’s called “experimentation.” You experiment with certain motions, and you find some of them will work in certain passages and some won’t work. I’ll give you an example. In one of the movements of Dvořák’s Eighth [Symphony], which I just did. (I didn’t conduct it, but I taught a seminar for young conductors.) There’s one place in the first movement, where the horns blare out five notes; and I don’t quite know what I do, but I do something with my left hand to accentuate that. Well, I said to all these conductors... I demonstrated, and I said, “this part in the horns deserves some kind of recognition.

So, they would get up and they would do that, and it was completely unhelpful, because it wasn’t natural. They were doing what they thought they saw somebody else doing. For me, it worked. I’ve done the piece many times and that always is a place where that seems to work. They couldn’t make it work, and they were doing the same thing, basically, that I was doing. I do say, “experiment” and I say, “don’t conduct like me.” Certain things, perhaps; but not in general, and certainly not specific body motions, because everybody has a different kind of body. Every body responds—“every body,” two words—in a different way, and every body influences an orchestra in different ways. Yes, you

ultimately have to have some body-motion that will influence the players, but you also don't want to copy anybody. You have to develop something that feels comfortable and is effective for you.

Ian Passmore: That's very true. We've already talked about the importance of knowing your scores. I don't think we could ever stress that enough. What is your personal score study process and how has that developed over time?

David Effron: With my teacher [Tibor Kozma], learning the scores perfectly, every element, was an important part of his philosophy and consequently an important part of my student years. I'm glad that I got that from him, because knowing the score frees you up to do a lot of other things that you wouldn't be able to do if you were dependent on the score. I'm proud to say that I always studied all the time. Even when things were prepared, I was studying. Thankfully, the amount of time one needs to study in later years is a little less. That depends on the piece, of course, but a little less than it was in the early years.

The problem is that it's not a lot less. Sometimes you wish it were when you devote so much time to it, but people change. Obviously over a fifty-year period, they change many times. I've changed a few times in that period and as a result, my approach to life and my approach to music is different. It's certainly different now than it was in 1960, because I didn't know as much; I was new. And things that happen in one's life, whether they be good things or traumatic things, really affect you psychologically. When something affects you psychologically, then your interpretation of music is different from the way it was before the event.

They say older people conduct slower because they're older and they know they do, so they compensate for it and then really want to go fast. That's not the kind of example I want to give. The kind of example I want to give is actually a much more spiritual approach to the music than you have when you're younger. That means that if I conduct, or anybody conducts, a Beethoven symphony when they're twenty years old and then again at thirty-five, that's not going to sound exactly the same. The tempi might be different, the voicings might be different, and that means that you have to study it again. I know some conductors who learn a piece when they're twenty and never look at it again, and it really

sounds, at age fifty, like something's wrong. You're not quite sure what it is; or you do know, because it's either an immature approach or it just doesn't feel honest. This is my opinion.

So, you have to study it again. You go back to the drawing board and you start over again. You're doing this constantly. I don't think I, and neither did a lot of my friends, ever conducted a piece with ten years in between and didn't go back to it and start over again and found, "oh, I did *that*. That isn't quite the way it should be or the way I feel it now."

In answer—my long-winded approach, as usual—the bottom line is yes, your whole life you're affected by changing interpretations, and again it goes back to studying all the time.

Ian Passmore: You and I have talked about your above-average ability to hear. I can certainly attest to that, having watched you conduct many rehearsals and coach student conductors, myself included. Did you find that your hearing, or perhaps your ability as a pianist, played a role in your score study process? Is that useful tool for you?

David Effron: First of all, let's not say I have an ability as a pianist. I did have an ability; I was a really good pianist. I wouldn't say I'm a good pianist anymore, but I was, and it helped me especially in the opera house where you play scores at the piano as part of the job. In the symphonic world it also helped me, because you sort of have a head start before you get to the orchestra. You can hear the sounds on the piano and it helps you to learn the piece.

That was an advantage. Before fifty years ago, I don't think any conductor didn't play piano. Every conductor had a certain talent for piano playing because they thought, quite correctly, without being a pianist... It's so connected to the orchestra, that if you didn't have that in your background, you didn't start correctly. So, everybody from Europe was a good pianist and most of them started in the opera house. That was the way to become an experienced conductor. And it went from piano lessons to perhaps composition and theory lessons, to becoming a pianist in an opera house. Going to an opera house, becoming a pianist, becoming an Assistant Conductor, becoming a conductor, and then branching out to the symphonic world, perhaps.

Nowadays, they become conductors without doing any of this. You can get to be a well-known, efficient conductor, by doing fifty different things. Everybody does it a different way and sometimes it works, sometimes it doesn't. But this whole idea about the connection between the piano and a conductor is... Well, I believe in that way as I was trained and everybody before me was trained.

Obviously, I'm not 100% correct because singers conduct, but they don't play the piano necessarily. Other people conduct that have no connection with the piano or even an instrument in the orchestra. But, the stick makes no sound, so nobody knows if it's really good or bad.

Ian Passmore: And then there are people nowadays that have built careers because of their skill on the other side of conducting, the social aspect.

David Effron: We were talking about it before, absolutely. Which just signifies how important that part is, that social life.

## Chapter 4: On the Rehearsal Process

Ian Passmore: What goes through your mind when you're planning for a rehearsal?

David Effron: The first thing—before I even get to the first rehearsal—I consider the time that is allotted across *all* of the rehearsals leading to the concert, then I plan out to how I want to devote each rehearsal. To what aspect of the repertoire will each rehearsal be devoted? So at the end, when it's ready to play for the concert, the works are prepared. I take rehearsal one and say I'm going to do a reading of the pieces, generally, and with a general focus on the passages that are difficult. As many of those that I can conquer in the first rehearsal, that helps.

The last two rehearsals, I really try to play the pieces through without stopping, because there's nothing like continuity. If you spend too much time on certain passages, but they never play the piece through—or play it through only once—the orchestra has no idea how they're supposed to pace the piece. So, it's [continuity] really important. That's probably the most important thing, to make sure you play the piece through no matter what happens and leave a little time at the end, so that you can woodshed again or work out certain things.

Generally, you have four to six rehearsals, and it's important to plan each rehearsal. Now that said, it can be that you get to rehearsal number three and you either have gone past that in your work or you didn't get that far, and then you have to be flexible, as we said early on. It's so important to be flexible. To recognize that and change—it's okay to change. But if you don't have a plan, you can really get bogged down. And you get to the end of the rehearsal period and realize that you haven't really done what you're supposed to do: you haven't rehearsed properly.

I find the rehearsal process so important that it influences the performances completely. There are many different ways to rehearse. I like to establish a pattern of continuity as far as my rehearsing, and in terms of color and rhythm, and general proficiency with the difficult passages. Those are the three things that are very important to me and I try to nip it in the bud at the

first rehearsal, any potential problem. If you let problems go by and you say, “well, I’ll correct it later,” the problems become ingrained in the players psyche and then you’re way behind.

Ian Passmore: I know you and I have talked before about the importance of making sure, especially with young players, that they get a sense of the total piece early on and then again later on in the rehearsal process. Because a lot of conductors don’t understand the importance, especially for young players, of developing and getting used to the endurance that it’s going to take to get through the piece.

David Effron: That’s absolutely right. I’ve seen—I think I’ve even been part of performances, occasionally—where you got two-thirds of the way through the piece and then, all of a sudden, it’s like letting air out of a balloon. They just don’t have any more left. That does happen.

With professional players, you want to give them an idea of how you do the piece, whatever that may be—what your take on it is. So, you play it through at the first rehearsal as much as you can. The difference between less experienced people and experienced people, professionals who are getting paid for it, is that you say something to the professional and for the most part they don’t forget. You can go back to it two days later and they’ll do exactly what you had suggested the first day. Whereas the younger players, they forget within two minutes. You play it twice in the same rehearsal, and the second time they didn’t remember what you told them the first time. I think that comes about because they are so concerned with their physical technique, that they’re focusing only on that and they’re not able to think about anything else.

Ian Passmore: I know I’ve personally seen you insist with student orchestras, after an instruction, that they immediately write it down for that very reason.

David Effron: That’s important. I like to treat people as professionals, but there’s a realization that they’re not called professionals, because they don’t yet have the tools to be professional. Not only in the playing, but you’d be surprised how many people don’t write stuff down. They didn’t even bring a pencil. Little things like that... I’ve had some inexperienced players recently, they were taking out their

telephone during ten bars of rest. I mean, that's unheard of. You'd be fired in a professional situation, or certainly called down.

Everybody starts the same when you're born, for the most part. The idea is that people have to mentor you and tell you all kinds of things, and that's the only way people learn. Otherwise, you can't learn. I came to the realization not so long ago, it's not that the students are trying to be defiant, they just don't know what the rules are. That's one thing you have to teach them.

Ian Passmore: We've talked about the responsibilities of a conductor and how those might adapt based on professional versus college, symphonic versus opera, and so on and so forth. I'd like to ask you the same thing about your approach to a rehearsal. How does your approach to the rehearsal change based on if you're working with a professional versus a college orchestra?

David Effron: The end result, what your goal is, is to get the concert as well prepared as it can be. The realistic thing is that with a student orchestra... You want them to play like the Boston Symphony, but they will never play like the Boston Symphony. But, you still want to get them as close to that as possible. With that in mind, first of all, you have more rehearsals generally with a student group because there's more to tell them about. Many, sometimes most of the orchestras at that age, have not only not played the pieces, but some of them haven't even heard of the pieces.

With the professionals, it's very simple. After you're in an orchestra for say ten years, maybe less, you basically have played the general repertoire and know these pieces. It's only a question of interpretation; it's not a question of woodshedding technical things. You don't have to work on those things—maybe occasionally, very seldom though.

Whereas with a student group, you're starting from scratch with every aspect of playing. You don't rehearse differently, there's just more to rehearse. The way one rehearses, the efficiency and making sure you target the places that need rehearsing, that's no different in any group. It's the time it takes to conquer these things, because with professionals you probably don't even have to rehearse a lot of the repertoire. With students you have to rehearse every aspect of the repertoire, so it takes a longer time.



Ian Passmore: With the academic ensembles, you typically have more rehearsals; and with a professional group, you've got to prioritize what you're going to hit in a limited rehearsal schedule.

David Effron: A good example of this is the Chautauqua Institute in Upstate New York. They have a summer festival and they have one rehearsal for a concert. Unless it's a huge Mahler symphony, then they may have two. They're already relying on the fact that everybody knows the pieces they're rehearsing. When I conducted them, I always rehearsed certain passages in every movement before I even played the piece. I was choosing those passages based upon the difficulty of the passage, and the fact that I knew the symphony and knew what was difficult for the orchestra. I would rehearse that way, movement by movement.

First, I'd target the first movement's difficult passages and then I'd play the first movement through. Or, depending on the length of the piece, I would target the whole symphony in the first half of the rehearsal. After intermission, I'd play it through, and I'd usually have a little time left over in case I wanted to redo something or it needed a little more work. That's a real task because many conductors do not know how to use time. I never heard a conductor say, "I have enough time for rehearsal. I don't want anymore." Everyone says, "I could use one more rehearsal. Can't I have it?" Well, you can't have it, so you have to work within the system or don't accept the job. In Chautauqua, you have very experienced players, so if you're playing standard repertoire—which they do, mostly—they can do it in one rehearsal. But, they still need the conductor to help those people up "Mount Everest," like I said, to target the difficult passages and rehearse them.

The rest of what the conductor does in that situation has to be clear as to the interpretation that he or she wants. His hands, and his facial expressions, and his body communicate that, because the players will react to it.

Ian Passmore: Could you also talk a little bit about how your thought process might change approaching a rehearsal depending on whether it's going to be a purely orchestral concert, or if you're going to be rehearsing a major concerto? Then, talk a little bit about how you approach the rehearsal process for an opera, because that's

obviously a much longer process before the orchestra even shows up.

David Effron: That's right. In an opera, you also have to rehearse the singers. And don't forget there's staging in an opera, too; they're moving, so they have to practice that together with the singing. So, by the time that you get to the orchestra, two and half weeks have elapsed. It depends on the opera, but since the singing and the movement are so tied together, I often skip what they call the *sitzprobe*. That's the rehearsal where the singers sit down on chairs facing the conductor and the orchestra, and they go through the opera together that way. Especially with experienced singers, I skip that rehearsal, and I have them move on the stage immediately once I have the orchestra. This takes time because you have more people to work with.

Ian Passmore: How might your approach to the rehearsal change depending on the program? For instance, a purely symphonic program versus a program that includes a major concerto?

David Effron: There is a basic difference in how you approach it. I just spoke about opera. If you have a major concerto, "major" mostly means a longer one. If you're doing a Brahms piano concerto or the Violin Concerto, for example, you're going to want to devote more time to that, than if you have a twenty-five-minute Mozart concerto. You have to plan your rehearsal before you get there, and hopefully you'll be smart enough to program a not-too-complicated piece around the Brahms, because you're not going to spend as much time as you normally would on it.

You also have to assume the soloist is well prepared. Most people like to meet with the soloist before they go in with the orchestra, so there are no surprises between the conductor and soloist as to the interpretation of the piece.

I don't do that for two reasons. The first reason is, since I have a lot of experience in opera, I can pretty much figure out what the soloist is doing and I like the spontaneity of that kind of scenario.

The other reason is... I once conducted Leonard Rose,<sup>27</sup> the famous cellist, and later he told me that I asked him to come to a rehearsal with me alone. Between you and me, the only reason I did that was I was only in my mid-twenties, and he was one of the world's greatest cellists, and I was scared sh\*tless. I didn't tell him that, but...

Ian Passmore: ...he probably knew.

David Effron: I'm sure he knew. And he said, "well, I was kind of surprised you asked me to do this." And he said that the last person, and the only person, who asked me to come to a rehearsal with him alone was George Szell.<sup>28</sup> So, I thought, "well, I'm in good company at least."

George Szell was not a great accompanist, actually, but that wasn't the reason he asked him. He asked him because they wanted to make sure they both had high standards and that they went together. Anyhow, since that time, often I don't have rehearsals with the soloists, but it's a common thing to do. Student soloists often have rhythm problems: they can't keep a steady tempo. Especially pianists, who rarely play with orchestra—they're always surprised by the sound. And the reaction to the orchestra is, "oh, this is much slower than it is if you're doing it with two pianos in a studio," so, there's always an adjustment problem with them. And many student pianists think that they can just have *carte blanche*, and they can do anything they want. All that takes time to sort out.

Ian Passmore: How might your rehearsal approach need to change based on your "rank" as a conductor, whether you're the Music Director, or a staff conductor, or a guest conductor? Does that play any role in how you might approach a rehearsal?

David Effron: I'd say yes. Let's start with the staff conductor whose power, if you will, is not very widespread, and generally looked at by the orchestra as, "well, we don't have to work too hard because he's just the staff conductor." I thought I said before when we talked

---

<sup>27</sup> Leonard Rose (1918-1984); American cellist and teacher; Associate Principal Cello, NBC Symphony Orchestra; Principal Cello, Cleveland Orchestra; Principal Cello, New York Philharmonic; string faculty, Curtis Institute of Music and the Juilliard School.

<sup>28</sup> George Szell (1897-1970); Hungarian conductor; Music Director, Cleveland Orchestra, 1946-1970.

about this that I thought it was very important for the staff conductor to always be in a good mood, happy, “let’s all do this for the Gipper,” kind of thing. Whereas, the Music Director can do anything the Music Director wants to do. And probably part of his job is to get the orchestra to a higher level than it is, no matter what it is; so he has to be a little bit stricter and perhaps repeat things more often in rehearsal. The staff conductor will generally rehearse less. And that person shouldn’t rehearse too much, frankly. A guest conductor is the best position to be in because no matter what happens, you’re gone in a week.

I won’t tell you who the person was. But I went to a concert with one famous conductor, and afterwards we were going to go out for dinner. The concert didn’t go very well, and I was trying to figure out what to say to him. Finally, he said, “this is the kind of performance where you just take that big check and deposit it into the bank.” And I thought at the time, “oh my God, what a terrible attitude.” But I understand it today, because there’s a lot of money involved, generally, so why not? The guest conductor wants to make a very good impression because he wants a re-engagement. He doesn’t want to be on their cases too much, because orchestra players are incredibly sensitive in an insensitive way sometimes. You can say something to somebody that’s meaningless, and they take great offense. And if you’re a guest conductor and you get two or three people who were offended, they probably won’t invite you back, all over something ridiculous that has nothing to do with the music.

Every situation is different. I’m trying to be general, but there’s really no generalization about any of these questions. Each situation is different for everybody.

Ian Passmore: Many conductors insist on using their own parts for particular pieces. Why is that, and is that something you do or have done in the past? If so, do you find it to be particularly helpful in the rehearsal process?

David Effron: It’s very helpful, because everything is notated in the part. For example, if it says “down-bow,” everybody’s playing down-bow. Why do they do it? Because there’s a reason. It’s an interpretive reason or a sound reason: you want a certain sound, and so everybody should play down-bow. But, perhaps it’s a note that

could be played up-bow. If it's not marked in the part, what the conductor wants, then half of them will play up and the other half will play down, and it will be a hodgepodge, and you won't get what you want in any case. So, many conductors use their own parts that they take from orchestra to orchestra to orchestra, so they have some continuity and some similarity. Also, they'll mark the wind parts. They don't have to, then, deal with balances in the rehearsal, because they've already marked it in the part, "even though it says play loud, here you play soft," because otherwise it won't balance with either the strings or their colleagues in the wind section.

It saves a lot of time. And these bowings have generally been proved already from previous performances, or maybe somebody takes bowings from another conductor, which isn't really plagiarism. Generally, the bowings are similar; sometimes they're not, but often they're similar. Sometimes there are minor changes. And the answer to your question about me: I didn't do that, and I'm content with using the parts they have because those parts are also uniformly made. The bowings are the same, and anything I want to change I can change on-the-fly at the rehearsal because there isn't always that much to change. If, for an interpretive reason, I want to change something to make it work, then I can do that.

I never thought I was primarily a symphony conductor, which I'm not. And by the time I got around to saying, "oh, I'm conducting a lot of symphony; maybe I should get my own parts," it was almost too late. But, it worked for me the other way. That's a very valuable thing to have, not only for that time, and not only for the present, but it's very valuable for future generations. If the conductors here at Indiana University had their own parts... My own teacher [Tibor Kozma] did, and they're in the library now. They're valuable because the man had a wealth of experience, and they're there for people to look at.

Ian Passmore:

Now that you've already brought it up, bowings are a sort of age-old hot-button issue amongst orchestral string players and conductors. What is your philosophy regarding bowings? Do you create your own, or trust the concertmaster and the other principal strings?

David Effron: Both. I think I trust a lot, in general. Don't forget, most of the repertoire has already been played by whatever orchestra you're conducting. If I want something for interpretive reasons, if I have to change a bowing, then I'll do that. I wouldn't go so far as to call myself an expert; but, I come from a background where my father was a violinist and I kind of know what I want, and it's not hard to change a bowing. I'll often ask the concertmaster, too, "I want it to sound like this. What's the best bowing to make that happen?" And sometimes I will say, "I want this bowing." I'll go to another orchestra and want the same thing, but they'll have a different bowing in their part. They won't object to a change, especially if it makes good musical sense.

Actually, this last weekend I was conducting the Tchaikovsky First Piano Concerto and there's this place where there are accents—three eighth-notes. I had them play all down-bow. Now, I don't know anybody who does that...maybe there is. But that came from my own idea and it created a really good effect. You could tell by the way their eyes lit up that they liked that. Anything new that isn't uncomfortable, orchestra players like. You have to remember, you can have a twenty-five-, thirty-, thirty-five-year orchestra career. How many times have you played the standard repertoire? Orchestra players in general like two things: they like new ideas, and they like spontaneity. Those are the two things that they really like. They will go for a conductor who does that, rather than somebody who does something perfectly but it's just the same traditional way of playing something.

Ian Passmore: Since you said you are very comfortable with the whole aspect of bowings, is there an instance where you might prefer to dictate those bowings yourself before the rehearsal, rather than trust the concertmaster and other principal strings?

David Effron: If I had a major change, then yeah, sure. Then I would say, "first we're rehearsing some things. Bar three, I want to change the bowing to be such and such." And I would articulate it, I would say, "because I want this kind of sound, and this bowing will help that." That's part of your job. If you can do that, you should.

Ian Passmore: And do you think that's equally as important to articulate between professional versus a wide variety of student groups? I would imagine, with younger players...

David Effron: I mean, if you're talking about the kindergarten class orchestra, it doesn't matter. But it's always important to say why you're doing something. Many conductors say, "I want this softer." "Okay, fine, we'll play soft." But if you can say, "I want this softer because playing softer will give me the texture that I believe should be here, as well as the balance. Then, the horn can come out if the trumpets play soft." It's important to tell them why. I just said two or three things extra about *why* I wanted it—because of the texture. They hear all that, and it'll help them to do what I want. It's important to do that, rather than just say, "play softer."

Ian Passmore: What advice might you have for the non-string-playing conductor?

David Effron: Learn as much as you can about the strings. How do you do that? There are books on bowings and things, but the best thing would be to get to a friend who plays the violin or cello, specifically, and ask this friend to spend time with you. Go over some pieces, perhaps beginning with Haydn, Mozart, and then going on to more complicated things. Ask this person to help you and tell you why they chose such a bowing. And after a while, there are patterns that you adopt. You'll never know more than the concertmaster, but if you can get the concertmaster to help you... Most people, they're very willing to help. They want to do it correctly, and if it helps somebody, they want to do it right.

Ian Passmore: How does your mindset and rehearsal technique change as you progress through a concert cycle? For instance, what are you listening for as you progress closer and closer to the performance? Are you purposefully nitpicking a little less?

David Effron: Purposefully nitpicking a little less, yes. You want them to feel comfortable at any given moment. The first rehearsals you have to conduct and go back to basics; but as they progress, you want to get out of their way, so you don't impede their own artistic voices. You want to get out of their way, especially in opera. Well, not especially in opera—in everything. You want to give the impression to each player and each participant that you're getting out of the way, but in reality, you're controlling it.

I don't know how to explain it, but I do know that the less information I have to give as I go along, I should do that. I should then become a part of them, and not the conductor versus the

players—the whole entity, I’m part of it. Close to the performance, I think of myself as part of the group; I don’t think of myself as the teacher. That’s the ideal that I want to get to.

Ian Passmore: I asked you about the conductor’s chief responsibilities. On the other side of that, what are the orchestra’s responsibilities? How does an orchestra hold up their end of the musical, artistic bargain?

David Effron: Two things: one) practice your parts before you get there, so you know it; and two) try to emulate, in every way you can as a player, the interpretation that the conductor is offering to you. But, in doing that, don’t lose your own identity. That’s one of the problems with orchestras. The individual players lose their identities. In the best orchestras, they don’t; they’re all equally important, and that’s the way they feel. They’re very, very proud of that. I have a former student who I talked to three weeks ago. He’s an American, but he’s been in the Israel Philharmonic for twenty-seven years as a horn player.

Just to hear him talk was more a rarity than anything else because he talked about the love of the orchestra, how each player feels they’re a part of the wheel of the orchestra, and how important it was for them to be prepared and play their solos beautifully. Because if they don’t feel a part of the orchestra, that’s one less element that’s not working as a group member. In many orchestras, it’s all a fight between individuals, because they can’t come together as a collaboration. The great orchestras like Berlin [Philharmonic], [Royal] Concertgebouw, and Philadelphia [Orchestra], they work as a team. It’s a team and I am, as the conductor, part of that team. I mean, I happen to have the title “conductor,” and my job is to get it up to a certain level. Once it gets up there, hopefully in the concert, you kind of feel yourself as part of the group and not as separate.

Ian Passmore: How do you overcome a particularly difficult or unproductive rehearsal situation? Let’s say the orchestra just doesn’t get the piece or worse, they just dislike the piece, they’re unprepared, etc.

David Effron: Well, that’s different from not liking the conductor. They’re two different things. You assume—and correctly so, if it’s a professional orchestra—you’re not getting paid to like or dislike the piece, necessarily; but you’re getting paid to do the best you



can with a it. I've conducted pieces I couldn't stand, but it never once occurred to me that I should sit back and not give it my all. That's all you can do. Now, if the majority of the orchestra doesn't like the conductor, then...well, most orchestras don't like conductors. That's where psychology comes in, where you have to get what you need, but in a different way. And there are many, many different ways. You're dealing with individual personalities who might be difficult, and you're dealing with large groups of people, some of whom might be difficult. It's kind of the luck of the draw in a professional situation. I don't know what else you would say.

I'll tell you a short story. I read the other day that in Berlin [Philharmonic], a lot of them are glad that Simon Rattle<sup>29</sup> is leaving. They didn't like him, and they haven't liked him for a long time. You can't tell that when they're playing a concert because they're real professionals. There are some superstar individual players who would fight him. They'd say, "I don't like the way you want my solo to be played. I feel it should be this way." A couple of them quit the Berlin Philharmonic because they were used to getting their own way. But he got in a continual tiff over every solo with one guy, and he finally said to him, "I make the rules here. I'm the director. You do what I say."

Okay, that's a last resort. You don't want to start at that end of it, but sometimes it just is not... It's like a marriage. Sometimes it's just not a good marriage, not a good relationship. There's nothing you can do to correct it, and you have to leave. If it's on a daily basis and you're the Music Director... (Well, usually they're not going to give you any trouble because you're the Music Director. Only in superstar orchestras might they do that.) If you don't give up on the level that you want to achieve, that's good. Because once you give up... It's like training a dog. If the dog isn't trained, he'll take advantage of you. And once you just throw your hands up, that's not good.

First of all, know your stuff. I don't like to use myself as an example a lot—and I'm sure there are other guys like this—but I usually make a good impression on an orchestra, especially in the second rehearsal. Sometimes not the first rehearsal... But the

---

<sup>29</sup> Sir Simon Rattle (b. 1955); English conductor; Principal Conductor, Berlin Philharmonic, 2002-2018.

reason I do isn't because of anything I do, necessarily. I'm just prepared, and I have interesting interpretations. That plays into it a lot, because they respect that. They want to be spontaneous. There's not much you can do to change a situation except from a musical standpoint; and be prepared, and be humble, and don't be a fake.

Ian Passmore: I know recently, I actually had someone ask me, "what do you do if you don't like the piece?" I said the same thing. It's not my job to like or dislike the piece, it's my job to convince the players why this piece needs to be the best it can be.

David Effron: But how people view feelings can be very subtle. You think you're not showing something, but you'd be surprised. If you're not giving your all, people can tell you don't like the piece. And if you don't like the piece, then they say, "well, why should I like the piece?" I did one piece that I really didn't like. Mostly it's not a question of "like," it's a question of I didn't understand it. I didn't understand what the composer meant to say, and what this piece meant. I agonized over it and it was a bad performance. I know today I have to take some responsibility for that. I didn't conduct badly; that was all fine. But, there was something in my soul that they read through.

Ian Passmore: You weren't invested in it.

David Effron: Yeah. They could read that.

Ian Passmore: Do you think it's even more important when working with a student group, that they not get the sense that you're checked out about a piece?

David Effron: Yeah, because the relationship is very different. They look up to the leader, the conductor. Often, they don't know what he's doing up there and they don't have the skills to watch him. But, because he has the title and he's a teacher to them, there's a certain amount of respect, automatically.

Ian Passmore: And in a situation with a professional versus a student group, the professionals are going to play at a certain level no matter what. Whereas with the students, they often have to be coaxed, in a way.

David Effron: That's true.

Ian Passmore: How do you deal—especially in such a public situation as a rehearsal—with a particularly difficult individual? Let's say it's a difficult player, singer, soloist, Stage Director, etc.

David Effron: You try to get your point across, but it becomes apparent pretty quickly that that person is not interested in what you have to say. You ignore them. You just ignore them. You don't listen to them, you don't correct anymore because it's just counterproductive; and if you don't participate, then you don't exacerbate the situation. There are some people that they like to cause trouble or they're prone to that. They don't like you or something. And when it gets that bad, you just ignore it. Look, you have an orchestra of sixty to ninety people. You can certainly afford one. You can certainly afford to not pay attention to one, because you have all the others; and by insisting or confronting, that doesn't help anything. It just doesn't.

Ian Passmore: That's certainly sound advice if you're talking about a difficult player or singer, or something where it's a larger environment. But what about conflict with a much more visible person in a group? Let's say it's a soloist or a Stage Director. How do you navigate that dynamic in front of an orchestra?

David Effron: You can't have an opera production without getting in some issue with the Stage Director. That doesn't happen in front of the orchestra; that happens at rehearsals where they're staging the opera. I had a situation where the head coach would try to correct me and tell me what to do, and this wasn't this, and that wasn't that. He was a very good coach. I think he cared, but he overstepped his bounds tremendously. So by small increments, I began to ignore him. And by the time the production of the opera was finished, I didn't even talk to him. I didn't even acknowledge him. I wasn't trying to be especially mean, I just didn't see the point of it. We were on different pages completely, for whatever reason.

I did tell the management, "he's overstepping his bounds, making it very difficult for everybody." They knew that. In fact, one person came up to me and said, "I was so amazed at how cool you were, because you could have really reamed him." In younger years, I would've reamed him, but now I don't think there's any point in it.

- Ian Passmore: And would you say that's a skill developed with experience, not to let it dig under your skin so much?
- David Effron: You have to be that way because in this profession, as a conductor, there's so much that can, as you say, "dig under your skin." If you don't have the ability to just toss it off, you're going to be completely intimidated and insecure. If you don't have those kinds of skills, then you do have to develop it to a certain extent, or you'll be a vegetable.
- Ian Passmore: It's one of those things where if you don't learn to let certain things bounce off you, it's easy to let everything eventually overwhelm you.
- David Effron: Right, and it will overwhelm you. It's not a bad thing to care so deeply about something that everything bothers you. It's only a bad thing because it affects you and everybody else negatively in the end. So, you just have to change your own personality.

## Chapter 5: On Repertoire & Programming

- Ian Passmore: What is your general philosophy regarding programming? Let's consider the same factors we've already discussed: professional versus college orchestras, purely symphonic programs versus those that include concertos, selecting an opera, things of this nature.
- David Effron: The ideal for programming is to first consider the level of the orchestra, as you just pointed out. Then, program things that will be challenging for the players and things that, in addition to being challenging, will be able to help the orchestra get to a higher level.
- If we're talking about orchestras and not audiences, at the moment, I think it's important to play all segments of repertoire. In other words, examples of all time periods, including contemporary music. That is always helpful in making the orchestra better; not only to become acquainted with a certain style, which they need to learn, but just having a cross section of all kinds of music is helpful to developing an orchestra. Also, it's more interesting to the players. Say you play Beethoven and late Mozart, and Schubert. If you play only those three composers, or mostly those composers... Well, there's a whole world out there, as you well know, and they should have a taste of everything.
- Ian Passmore: Do you think that's equally important for professionals and students? It's often assumed that with students it's more important that they get the standard rep, what we might consider the "meat and potatoes" of the repertoire.
- David Effron: It's more important with the students because... Look, you can play only standard rep pieces for the next eighteen years and not cover everything. I think you still should have a diet of many different things and cover this standard rep at the same time, and do rep that will challenge them and make them better players.
- Ian Passmore: You talked about symphonic programming; I'm sure it differs somewhat based on whether you're a professional or academic conductor. How much control might you have over the programming of something like a concerto or even an opera?

David Effron: The ideal is that you have a lot of control, especially if you're the Music Director, you have lot of control. For example, with the soloist, it's perfectly within your rights to say, "I want you to play the Prokofiev Second Piano Concerto." On the other hand, it's also correct to bow to the soloist and say, "What would you like to play?" And if they say, "Prokofiev Second Piano Concerto," you could say, "well, that's a great choice, but unfortunately it doesn't work with the rest of the program." You have to find compatibility with programming, too. So, with a soloist, I think it's fine to do it either way.

With an opera, you really want the best singers you can get for the price you're willing to pay; and since you're the expert on the musical end of the opera, you should have every right to choose your cast. Unfortunately, it doesn't quite work that way in reality, because the General Managers of companies or the General Directors of companies are choosing now, the cast they want, more so than the conductors. Unfortunately, as anybody will tell you, the majority of these General Managers don't know anything about opera. My manager told me that General Managers of opera companies would call him and say, "what type of singer should I get for the role of Carmen? I don't know." And, "who can you recommend?" They didn't know who was in the business who sang it. That's exaggerated. Maybe they knew who sang the first two major roles, but after that they didn't.

Of course, the conductor's and the Stage Director's inputs are important and should be honored. Sometimes they don't see alike, then they have to compromise. More and more it's becoming that the conductor's role in the opera house has been diminished, and one of the aspects is that they don't always take part in the casting.

Ian Passmore: We talked about the larger degree of control a Music Director might have. What about programming considerations as a guest or as a staff conductor?

David Effron: You're certainly welcome to suggest, but as a guest it depends what your status is. If you're a well-known, popular conductor, they may ask you what you want to do. Most of the time the management has ideas that they'll run past you. For instance, if they asked me to program a Vaughan Williams symphony, I would probably decline. I've done a couple of them; I'm not enamored of

them. I don't think I do them particularly well. And if I'm going to be a guest conductor, I want to do what I conduct the best, so I get a re-engagement. Sometimes they'll acquiesce to you, and other times they say, "well, we really need to play the Vaughan Williams symphony." What they don't tell you is that the Music Director never wanted to conduct it, so they throw it on you.

Every situation is a little bit different, and you hope that they will let you do more or less what you want.

Ian Passmore: I know—just speaking from my own limited experience as a staff conductor—what's often going on my mind is that I always have the smallest possible orchestra they can use for an event. And, I always have one rehearsal to do it.

David Effron: And that's so typical. With a smaller orchestra, your repertoire is limited. But you're in the majority; all Assistant Conductors are in the same situation.

Ian Passmore: Let's discuss your extensive experience working with student orchestras. How, if at all, do you reconcile or compromise your own artistic needs and thoughts with the pedagogical needs and the potential limitations of a student orchestra?

David Effron: I alluded to this before in saying that I don't change my standards. I still strive to have them play like the Boston Symphony, knowing full well that they never will. If I said I would be happy with them playing like the Bay of Pigs Philharmonic, then that wouldn't be helping anybody. My standards would be so low at that level that I would accept almost anything, so I don't want to do that. I strive to what I would want for myself. I'd like to perform like I'm in front of the Boston Symphony knowing full well that isn't going to happen, but with those thoughts I always felt very good about the level we did achieve. We got to a higher level by having that philosophy.

Ian Passmore: What effect does that play on the programming? Are you saying that you pick certain pieces because you know they're going to play to the strengths of the orchestra and hide its weaknesses?

David Effron: Yes, but you also play some pieces that you know that you're going to have to put out even more, and work harder so they can grow.

Sometimes, you play pieces because they're a part of a repertoire that's not played a lot, or that the students don't have a lot of familiarity with. I will tell you one thing in working in a school. I had to laugh. You said, "the difference between a professional conductor and one in academia," and that's like an insult to me. Not to me personally, but to the whole profession of conducting [laughter]. You're either a conductor or you're not. I know that when I started working in a school, my professional life did suffer a little, because they said, "oh, he's just a school conductor." Well, that's right. I am at a school, but first and foremost, I'm still the same conductor as when I was working in the profession. My colleague has trouble with that concept, and I think he's right. "I'm here and I'm just like you;" you're a conductor or you're not. That's neither here nor there; but I know that it's a sore point with people I know who are very good conductors and work in schools.

Ian Passmore: You get pigeonholed?

David Effron: You get pigeonholed in every aspect of conducting. I was pigeonholed for years. I'm really a good opera conductor, but nobody ever said anything about symphony because I didn't conduct symphony very much at all. They still say that. They still say, "he's [David Effron] an opera conductor." It's very interesting how you get pigeonholed.

But, it's important that part of the musical diet for college-age kids is to play not only the repertoire, but all kinds of music, including pops. A number of summers ago we did a pops concert here, which not only gave them an idea of a different style of music that they never play, but it got a full house. It was completely sold out, which tells you what the audience wanted to hear. We never did it again because I guess the powers-that-be didn't think it was such a good idea, but it was terrific.

Ian Passmore: Thomas [Wilkins] just did the same thing here during the summer, he did a pops concert. It's good that you stated that pops is an important part of the educational experience, because a lot of them [students] don't realize that they'll get out there and they're not going to be playing Beethoven and Mahler all the time.

More often than not, it's going to be these lighter programs. Nowadays, they're going to be playing *Harry Potter* and *Star Wars*



because that's what people want to hear, and that's how orchestras make money.

David Effron: That's exactly right.

Ian Passmore: With your experience training student orchestras over the years, have you found that there are any particular composers, or even specific pieces, that are especially valuable for student orchestras to learn and know how to play that style really well?

David Effron: Dvořák. Also, there isn't enough Mozart done. Why isn't enough of it done? Because that's one of the issues you have in schools, that every teacher wants their students to play as much as possible. If you're playing Mozart, you rarely have trombones, and you never have a tuba, and you don't have four horns. So it's frowned upon in academia to play this kind of stuff, because it doesn't use all the players. I think I told somebody once, "well, if you wanted to play in every piece, you should have played the violin and forgotten about the tuba." I'm sorry some composers didn't write for tuba. So, that's an issue. Also, early Tchaikovsky symphonies—the first two, especially, are really good for student orchestras. They teach them a little about Tchaikovsky's compositional style, and they always sound good. Student orchestras play those two symphonies especially well, so I would try to program that. The Brahms Second [Symphony], of course, that seems to work. I'll tell you what students enjoy—and because they enjoy it, they play it generally well—is *The Planets* by Holst.

Ian Passmore: With students, do you typically do the whole thing or leave out the last movement with the chorus?

David Effron: I don't leave anything out. I do one of two things: if I have a chorus, I use the chorus; if I don't, I use a recording that I made a long time ago with people singing. I just coordinate the recording with the piece.

Ian Passmore: Interesting.

David Effron: Because I can't leave it out; it wouldn't make sense

You take a risk because the guy who's operating the tape has to be right on, or else it gets off. There are pauses, and then you start again. It's risky, but when it works, it's good.

Ian Passmore: What is it about Mozart and Dvořák's music that's important for student orchestras?

David Effron: Mozart, I don't think we have to say; it's obvious what's important. With Dvořák, it's an introduction to the whole Romantic repertoire up until 1900, where things did change. It's all that repertoire you can relate to. As far as learning how to play the Romantic repertoire, Dvořák's a good composer.

Ian Passmore: What are the different challenges in programming, let's say, a single concert cycle versus programming an entire season?

David Effron: I'm all in favor of playing, for example, all the symphonies of Beethoven throughout a whole season—not on one concert, of course, but throughout the whole season—and doing them in order would be my preference. It's a good thing and it's a good selling point. It's also a good marketing thing to play the 100th birthday of somebody and play that person's work.

Ian Passmore: Like this year's Bernstein centennial.

David Effron: Yeah, that's really a good thing, because people really know who he was and they can relate to him. A lot of people alive today can relate to him. That's how you honor dead composers: keep playing their music. I like to have a theme, but not all the time. I would rather have a theme over a whole year's programs than have a theme for one concert.

You can have a lot of concerts like that. There are a lot of things that are relatable, and the reason to do that is primarily a marketing issue and not a player issue. Because they think people say, "oh, they're playing all whatever, so I'm going to go to the concert because I like the way that..." It's a ploy to get people in. I'm not quite sure why it is, but it is.

Ian Passmore: Like anything else, programming changes over time. Over the course of your career, how have you seen orchestral programs or the trends in orchestral programming change?

David Effron: There was a time in the forties (I was just a kid) where there was a strong emphasis on American born composers: Walter Piston,<sup>30</sup> Norman Dello Joio.<sup>31</sup> It's people like that whose music is really good, but they don't play that stuff anymore. I went on a tour once with a Piston symphony: it was a huge hit. It has characteristics of the Romantic era, and then some places that are kind of...I wouldn't say "far out," but there are indications that there's going to be another type of music—contemporary. I'm sorry to say those pieces are hardly ever performed [nowadays]. When I remember early on, occasionally a world premiere of something would be played, but mostly the standard literature was played then.

I remember in the late-forties and fifties, they had an outburst of American [music], as I just mentioned. And then it got a little bit *avant-garde*, where they played stuff you've never heard before. That didn't really work as far as audiences were concerned because they didn't understand it, and it was not presented in a way that they could understand. Now, more focus is on the conservative program. At least one piece on every program is a "singable" piece that you go out whistling and that you heard before. That's the way programming has changed. How it will go from here really has to do with if orchestras will survive in the next lifetime, and the thing is that they don't know what will make an orchestra survive right now. Nobody knows because that hasn't gotten too much better. It may not even live with the repertoire. To a certain extent it has to, but some people put more emphasis on that.

So you see, for seventy years or so there's been different focuses on different types of music to make a program.

Ian Passmore: With the big-budget orchestras, you sometimes see the title of "Composer in Residence." Is that a relatively new concept?

David Effron: It is relatively new. The great nineteenth-century masters are never going to go away, nor should they. It's always the pre-nineteenth-century and the post-nineteenth-century. Only time will determine if those composers after Stravinsky... Are they even going to be

---

<sup>30</sup> Walter Piston (1894-1976); American composer, teacher, and theorist; music faculty, Harvard College/University, 1926-1960.

<sup>31</sup> Norman Dello Joio (1913-2008); American composer and teacher; music faculty, Sarah Lawrence College, Mannes College of Music, and Boston University; winner of the 1957 Pulitzer Prize for his composition *Meditations on Ecclesiastes*.

heard of? I read an obituary of a modern-day composer, and it made me think about all the new music that exists out there. How many of these composers are going to be remembered in ten years? I don't know. Who determines greatness in music? I'm not sure their music isn't great. As we all know, we live in an extremely complicated time in which music is a small part. Because the time we live in now is so changeable and so difficult, and it presents all of us with issues that we never even thought of, living in this country. Classical music is just one part of it.

Ian Passmore: I know you mentioned earlier on, the forties and fifties, this idea of the American wartime composers. You and I have talked about this before, that now we remember Gershwin, Copland, and Bernstein—that group. That doesn't necessarily make their contemporaries' music any less good.

David Effron: No, it doesn't.

Ian Passmore: It seems that with the passage of time, those folks' music is simply what stuck around.

David Effron: It's perception. It's the way people view things.

Ian Passmore: We've talked about what people might consider good or bad music, and now I'm going to ask you to make that kind of a judgment call. What are the areas of the orchestral and operatic repertoire that you found yourself returning to most often over the course of your career? Why do you think those pieces and those composers resonate so strongly with you? What's the music that really speaks to you?

David Effron: I'm into the dramatic—I like dramatic. I live life dramatically; and I live music dramatically even if it doesn't have a story behind it. If it does, all the better. If it doesn't, I hear in the music something I can create. That said, I like Verdi and Puccini, and I also like Strauss. I also like Stravinsky, although I don't like to conduct it as much as some other composers, but I appreciate it. *Fantastique Symphonie*, of course. Mahler...and that's mostly because I somehow relate to Mahler himself and the kind of life he had. Those are the composers that come first to mind. And since I conducted those works a number of times, I kind of think I do them okay. So I keep coming back to them, not only because I just love

them—I never get tired of them—but I think I do them fairly well, having done them many times.

I like the violin concerto literature, probably because I grew up in a violinist's home and I know that repertoire. Anything that is dramatic, I like. Shostakovich, I love because it's tied up with history so obviously. I love history, and I can feel him in his writing. You can just feel it. Those are the composers I like. It's nothing so profound, but there's so much literature with these composers. When you know a lot of that literature, like Verdi for example—from the first opera to the end, to *Falstaff*—you can really hear and feel how he grew. It was incredible. I love that aspect of it.

Ian Passmore: Speaking of your love for the dramatic, I noticed you didn't mention Beethoven or Tchaikovsky.

David Effron: Yeah, Beethoven doesn't resonate with me like it probably should. That doesn't mean I don't appreciate the greatness, but it doesn't resonate with me. And, I waited a long time before I conducted any Beethoven. He was not a composer I had conducted even until my late thirties, I think. I knew all the symphonies, but I didn't feel them the way they should be. The Seventh [Symphony] was one that I conducted a lot; somehow, I seemed to be able to relate to that one.

The opera *Fidelio* also is a very good story, but somehow the music doesn't resonate with me like a Verdi opera. I don't know the answer, but I do know that you cannot love every composer equally. And the best thing to do if you can't feel one composer so much, you should not conduct that composer. It would be too bad if it were Beethoven, you can't get away with not doing some Beethoven. I mean, not that you want to "get away," but Vaughan Williams is a good example. I've done Vaughan Williams. I can't really relate to it, so I don't conduct it.

Ian Passmore: Yeah, I know. Of course, I'm still young [laughter]. There's a lot of repertoire I've still yet to conduct.

David Effron: You know a lot of repertoire, though. I know that.

Ian Passmore: I've said this to people that asked me about it before: there's a lot to be said about your initial gut reaction to a piece, even if you've

really tried to study something and understand it more. Sometimes that doesn't go away. And for me, Debussy was a composer...

David Effron: Me, too.

Ian Passmore: ...that I never warmed up to and still haven't, but I might. There's no telling what might happen down the road. But, I have a much easier time wrapping my head around the other major French composers: Ravel, for example. Debussy still doesn't resonate with me, so we'll have to see what happens down the road.

David Effron: Yes, down the road. That's what happens. It's true.

And it's not a crime for some people not to resonate with you. It's impossible for every style to be equally loved.

Ian Passmore: Of course not, and it doesn't necessarily mean that it's good or bad music.

David Effron: Yes, and it has nothing to do with you.

Ian Passmore: Are there any other composers or pieces that you've had to warm up to more gradually, or composers or pieces that you've just found yourself avoiding entirely?

David Effron: Yeah. You brought up Debussy and Ravel. For me, I had to warm up to them, and I would say Bruckner I had to warm up to. And the greatness of Bruckner's symphonies isn't in the repetitive quality of them. It's in the colors and the organ-like sound, and its influence from the church. I didn't get that at first, but I had to warm up to it. Some of the Strauss operas with the exception of [*Der*] *Rosenkavalier*, I had to warm up to, although I love the Strauss orchestral literature. I'm crazy about it.

There have been some pieces that I never warmed up to. As with all performing musicians, there are those pieces that you just can't relate to, but you have to conduct for whatever reason. There've been pieces like that. I don't think I want to name them, but there have been. I'm sure every conductor in the world has faced the same thing. You can tell when a person is giving his or her whole heart to a piece, as opposed to trying to give your whole heart but it just doesn't click.

Ian Passmore: Bruckner, now that you mention it, is another big one that's sort of in my blind spot. And I actually had someone tell me once that he thought the greatest thing, or the most interesting thing about Bruckner was that no matter what music he wrote, or what the tempo was, Bruckner always sounds slow.

David Effron: *[laughter]* It's true. I thought you were going to say that no matter what music he wrote, it all sounded alike.

Ian Passmore: Yeah, slow and similar.

What are your thoughts regarding outside influence on a conductor's programs, such as artistic administrators, programming committees, and things of that nature?

David Effron: It lies in their court, that they should honor everything that people want. Honor it in the sense that you take it seriously, and you weigh it. In the end, though, the final decision needs to be with the musicians and with the conductor, and not the Board.

However, if you want to get along with all these people, you can't just blatantly dismiss anything. You have to take it all very seriously. I've had Boards where there've been individuals who thought they knew more about music than Beethoven did—and certainly more than I did—and they knew exactly how to program, and whatever I did they didn't like it. What do you think I did? I ignored them after a while. When you have an artist that you just can't get along with, you ignore them; (and I ignored this guy, but nothing would stop him. He was just a very selfish man, who really... I guess he wanted to run the orchestra. That's what I figured.)

That's what is hard about this job. Any kind of job in leadership is very hard because you're surrounded by so many people who don't agree with what you want. You have to honor them, because either they're the ones who hired you or do the hiring. It puts your job in jeopardy if you don't try to get along with them.

Eventually, any relationship with a conductor fails. And that means to me that, with the exception of very few, most conductors are finished with an orchestra after 8-12 years; because there are so many issues with people who really aren't on your level as a musician, don't know anything about it, and they have an idea

that's counter to yours. Eventually, they see the position of the Music Director in a different way than you see it and finally you're just gone. That's all.

Ian Passmore: Is this idea of artistic administrators, programming committees, and other outside influences on programming, is that something you've seen become more of an issue in the last few years?

David Effron: Yeah, and not only more of an issue that these people are engaged in those kinds of things, but they know less. There are people who know absolutely nothing and yet they're giving the orders. For a musician—or for anybody who's at least a semi-expert or an expert in any field—that's a hard thing to swallow. Because of your expertise, you know more about what direction the orchestra should go to achieve a certain level; and a lot of these non-musician types, they don't really know, but they somehow are in a position where they have a lot of influence.

I'm pretty objective about things like this. Every job I ever left, I thought that they didn't proceed down the right path to continue what had been done. Why, I don't know. Maybe I was too strong and they wanted some kind of thing where people weren't as strong. I don't know the reason. I know at Brevard [Music Center]—and this is nothing against my colleague, I like him—but they insisted on hiring Keith Lockhart<sup>32</sup> who couldn't be there a lot. He is only there two or three weeks a summer, and that's like death for an institution if the main guy isn't there. So, they're going off in that kind of direction. I don't know why they would do that when the last two Music Directors were guys that spent the whole summer there. It's certainly not as good for the organization. A lot of things he does very well. I'm not saying that. But I am saying that if you're not on-site all the time, what's the point? Who's running the ship? I do hear things. You don't believe everything you hear but it's so different that the level isn't quite like it was. It wasn't because I'm better than he is. I don't mean anything like that. People go in a certain direction and all of a sudden, the trend, they had to change it, do the opposite, whatever it is. It's not always a good thing.

---

<sup>32</sup> Keith Lockhart (b. 1959); American conductor; Music Director, Boston Pops Orchestra, 1995-present; Artistic Director, Brevard Music Center, 2007-present.



- Ian Passmore: It's a generation—and it has been now for some time—in which a lot of Music Directors aren't with their “home” orchestra, or they don't necessarily even have a home orchestra because they're just not there often enough. So, this idea of an individual sound has gone away.
- David Effron: I think I can be pretty safe in assuming that most conductors would rather have a career where they're guest conducting all over, because they don't have all the extra things they have to decide, and they don't have a Board to contend with. They just go in and conduct, and in the end that's what we all want. We just want to conduct and do our thing. There are some who won't take Music Director posts because of that, and what I learned from it is that I don't think I would either.
- Ian Passmore: I know the example we always hear of that is Carlos Kleiber,<sup>33</sup> who famously never accepted a major Music Director position. I think it was said that he only conducted when he needed to eat.
- David Effron: I had heard that, too. *[laughter]*

---

<sup>33</sup> Carlos Kleiber (1930-2004); German conductor; famously eccentric and reclusive; son of the Austrian conductor Erich Kleiber. Although he held very few permanent posts, he appeared as a guest with many of the world's leading orchestras and operas companies, including the Vienna Philharmonic, Royal Concertgebouw, Bavarian State Opera, and the Metropolitan Opera.

## Chapter 6: “Case Studies” or, On the Importance of Musical Instinct

Ian Passmore: We’re talking today about repertoire-specific rehearsal techniques as—sort of—“case studies” of what we’ve discussed thus far. We’ll be talking about Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, Sibelius’s *Finlandia*; and then a couple of recitative and/or aria excerpts from *The Marriage of Figaro* and *La Boheme*.

I once saw you rehearse and conduct the IU University Orchestra, which as you know is Indiana’s...

David Effron: ...less experienced orchestra, supposedly.

Ian Passmore: The program was Sibelius’s *Finlandia* and Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony. I attended that first rehearsal during which you told the orchestra something to the effect of, “I chose these two pieces to teach you all some of the things that I believe to be most important when learning to play in an orchestra setting.” Before we get into the pieces, would you talk a little bit about what you meant by that? What are good tenants of good orchestral performance versus good chamber or solo music performance?

David Effron: Well, chamber music and solos and orchestra, they all encompass the same things that make good performances. *Finlandia* is great, because it’s playable for a less experienced orchestra, number one. Number two, it has elements that are important, especially for the brass balance, which young people don’t do on their own. When you balance all of the brass passages, that opens up a door for them to understand how important that is, and they have to do that with every piece. Eventually they do it on their own when they become more experienced.

Also, *Finlandia* has dramatic places and a very lyrical section. That lyrical section, the contrast of things that can be done with an orchestra when you have first dramatic and then lyrical, there are a myriad of ideas you can have. It shows for them different approaches to playing different styles all in one piece. It’s a very good piece for study.

Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony has everything: rhythm, drive, and the importance of staying together in the first movement. If you can master that... Well, this is the symphony to master it with.

That's very important. Then, of course, the lyricism of the second moment as well as balance problems; it requires a lot of listening.

One of the things that less experienced, young players don't have a handle on is listening, because they're so busy. I find them so busy trying to find where to bow, how much to bow, where to put their fingers on the string...

Ian Passmore: They're more concerned with their technical limitations.

David Effron: They should be concerned, but they also haven't advanced far enough to acquire other things that are important. The third movement is valuable because it also encompasses steady rhythm, which is very, very important at a fast speed. Then there are great solos for wind players; there's an oboe solo, there's a horn soli... The Beethoven Seventh also gives a good introduction of how you pace a symphony; it's a standard, fast, slow, scherzo, fast structure.

You can learn a lot about the Romantic symphonies and the late Classical symphonies by studying this symphony. You want to challenge the people by giving them stuff they can play, but they have to work hard to play it: that's great. Both these pieces are that way. We have a lot of students, as does every university music school, that really have not been exposed to a lot of classical music. We have people in the orchestra like that.

If you go to a freshman orchestra in some schools and you say, "how many people ever heard the Beethoven Seventh Symphony," you wouldn't get a lot of hands. In our school [Indiana University], yes, some people have been acquainted with it and know it, but there are also young students who don't know it. These two pieces, the Sibelius [*Finlandia*] and the Beethoven [Seventh Symphony], are perfect pieces, because young people respond mostly to emotional things and not intellectual music, per se, at least not in the beginning if they don't have a lot of experience.

Here, you get two pieces that are played often, under your belt. You get to learn a lot about Beethoven, who has written a lot of repertoire. Hopefully, you get to do this having a lot of fun in an orchestra because it's challenging, but not too challenging. These pieces encompass many of the issues that young people are going to confront in every piece. That's the answer, I guess.

Ian Passmore: I know you said that the Beethoven Seventh was a piece that resonated with you early on. Let's start with that and try to talk through a little of each movement and some of the problem places, as well as things that could be gained by student players. I'll let you take the reins here.

David Effron: I would like to say that, first of all, this was a perfect symphony for me to start with. It's a good Beethoven symphony for any conductor to begin with, who hasn't conducted much Beethoven. It's very accessible. It's typical of Beethoven, but the accessibility is a little bit more than some of his other symphonies. It has less technical problems than his other symphonies, actually. The early symphonies are very difficult to conduct, actually. Young conductors think, "oh, it's the First Symphony, so it has to be easy," but it's not easy. The Third Symphony has lots of issues. The Fourth [Symphony] is somewhat like the Second Symphony, etc.

The Fifth Symphony is done so much that I don't usually recommend that somebody conduct that symphony first, because it's been well done, and it's been hackney done. Sometimes with young conductors, too much is ingrained that's bad, in a piece that's so popular. It's better to start clean as far as I'm concerned, and so I started with this [Seventh] symphony. I told you that I didn't conduct a lot of Beethoven until later because I didn't feel I was ready to offer... It just had so many issues about it.

If you look at the introduction [to the Seventh Symphony], the entire introduction—and I'll speak in terms of a young orchestra—the rhythm... Most of the time when students have notes of equal value—like the ascending sixteenth-note passage in the introduction that occurs in the lower strings and upper strings (Example 6.1)—there's a tendency to rush. The term that comes to mind is "inner rhythm;" not just rhythm, but inner rhythm. You feel and hear every sixteenth. That's when you have good rhythm, otherwise it's not good. They don't understand that concept. There's not a lot of good training about that prior to coming to college, so that's an issue.

**Example 6.1: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 10-15, ascending sixteenth-notes in the strings**



There are beautiful wind passages, like at letter A. That's bar number 23. It's a good lesson for clarinets and bassoon to play like an accompaniment, just like a magic carpet for the solo oboe (Example 6.2). Those are things, balance things, students don't do naturally. They just don't. That's another reason that this symphony is good. That's one of the problems. If I look at the introduction, I could spend a good forty-five minutes to an hour [of rehearsal] on those bars.

**Example 6.2: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 20-24, solo oboe at m. 23**



I know there are conductors... After you've done something a long time, you know where the pitfalls are with any level of orchestra you might conduct.

Okay, now the transition from the slow section to the *Vivace* is extremely problematic, and it brings up a problem of steady rhythm once again and understanding what a conductor does (Example 6.3). In early years, I was mortified, because people didn't understand. Sometimes when you know something, you take

it for granted. Then, you think everybody else knows the same thing—it never occurs to you. Young people often don't know what the conductor's doing, but they know he's trying to keep us together—that's what he does. But, there's so much more involved. They don't relate to the conductor at times when they really should. You don't have to look at the conductor 100% of the time, but there are places where you really have to look.

I told you this story of a Dvořák Eighth that I heard recently, and the flutist in the recap came in a bar too soon. The conductor was trying to get that person's attention, but the guy was in dreamland. I guess you could be in dreamland with that theme—it's lovely—but he [the flutist] obviously didn't know he was wrong, and he [the conductor] couldn't get his attention.

*[getting back to the Beethoven Seventh Symphony, first movement]* Here, the *Vivace*—the flute and the oboe—it's a good lesson in A) perfect rhythm, B) staying together, and C) balancing the flute and the oboe (Example 6.3). The conductor is going to help you. That's what you learn. Here it's too complex not to look at the conductor. You have to look. Sometimes the conductor needs to explain to young orchestras exactly what this [conducting] all means and how the tempo is given to them.

**Example 6.3: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 61-70, transition from introduction into *Vivace***

The musical score for Example 6.3 shows the transition from the introduction into the *Vivace* section of Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, movement I, measures 61-70. The score is written for a full orchestra, including Violins I and II, Violas, Cellos, Double Basses, and Piano. The tempo is marked *Vivace. ♩ = 103.* and the dynamics are *sempre p* and *cresc.*. The score shows the transition from the introduction into the *Vivace* section, with the piano part playing a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes.

The use of the bow is important. There's a big difference in bow use between the passage at bar 84, and then the passage just a few bars later at bar 89. The use of the bow is very different. You start basically at the lower part of the bow, or lower-middle, when you have a passage like [*singing mm. 84-88*]. But then, when you have the [*singing mm. 89-90*], you've got to take a full bow (Example 6.4). I often have said to young players, "you can make some money because you should sell half your bow. You only use half of it; you never use the whole bow." They don't do that.

**Example 6.4: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 82-90, bow usage in mm. 84-88 vs. mm. 89-90**



Ian Passmore: I say something similar. I say, “your bow probably costs a lot of money for you to not use the whole thing.”

David Effron: Ha! Yeah, same idea.

Ian Passmore: How do you handle a moment—I know this happens a lot not only in symphonies, but also in opera—like measure 88, that *fermata* (Example 6.5)? I know I call it a “re-beaten” beat, where you have to beat the same beat twice.

**Example 6.5: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 82-90, *fermata* in m. 88**



David Effron: Yes, that’s right. There are different ways of doing it. How you utilize that *fermata* has to be explained to the orchestra, but not a professional orchestra.

There’s maybe two or three ways of doing it. The most common way of doing it is [*singing*] “*fermata*,” and as you say...



Ian Passmore: Beat the first beat again.

David Effron: Yeah, and in order to beat the first beat again, you end like this [*demonstrates passive upbeat*], kind of on a high plane. Then I like to give what I call a non-playing advisory, because you're not high enough to really beat the first one again. This serves as saying, "on your mark, get set, go." [*singing*].<sup>34</sup>

That is, from the conductor's viewpoint, for conducting an orchestra of not such sophisticated youngsters. Because that happens a lot, like you said. So, the mastery of rhythm, which is really a big illness with young people, this first movement is terrific for that.

Ian Passmore: This [*singing mm. 63-66*] is a famously problematic rhythm that's easy to slip out of (Example 6.6).

David Effron: How the conductor interprets [*singing mm. 63-66*]*—the length of the sixteenth-note, the shortness of that note—or maybe some people want it a little longer. It's become kind of a joke amongst conductors. Because no matter what you do, you can always tell the orchestra that they didn't do it right and you have to rehearse it. That makes you look like you're a genius on what the rhythm is, when in the end it probably comes out the same way after you've rehearsed it. You know what I mean?*

**Example 6.6: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 61-66, primary rhythmic motive in mm. 63-66**



<sup>34</sup> The "non-playing advisory" mentioned here refers to a passive, seemingly out-of-time, upbeat, given during the *fermata*. When that passive upbeat drops into beat one (which has been beaten once already), it effectively serves three purposes: 1) reestablish the tempo, 2) release the *fermata*, and 3) serve as a preparatory beat for the sixteenth-notes in the second half of m. 88.

Ian Passmore: Yeah.

David Effron: *[jumping ahead within the same movement]* Keep up the tempo at bar 300, because young winds who have solos tend to go slower. I guess they want more time to shine, but this oboe solo *[singing m. 301]* can't slow down. It's a place where players slow down if they're young. There again is that *fermata*, but it's handled differently—the *fermata* at 299 (Example 6.7). Now, what are you going to do? You have several choices. *[Singing and conducting m. 299]* and they'll come off of it when you move: *[singing and conducting m. 300]* and move. I do it differently, because sometimes they don't understand the purpose of the upbeat and what tempo is involved, what tempo you play based on the upbeat. Here's a *fermata*: *[singing and conducting mm. 299-300]* is what I want. But do it this way, *[conducting release and upbeat unclearly]* and you get a mess as the result.<sup>35</sup>

I just got less secure about them doing it right, so I learned early on I'm going to do it a different way. I go: *[singing and conducting mm. 299-300]* "*fermata, off; bum, bum.*" It's slower.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>35</sup> After beating the *fermata* in m. 299, the baton should discreetly (i.e. passively) float away from the point at which the first beat was given [ictus]. Then, the baton must drop sharply into the second beat (in tempo) in order to both release the *fermata* and prepare the winds' pick-up into m. 300.

<sup>36</sup> Alternatively, the *fermata* in m. 299 can be released with the left hand. Then, the pick-up into m. 300 and the following *fermata* can be dictated individually. This way, the pick-up is essentially played out of tempo.

**Example 6.7: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 296-303, fermatas in mm. 299-300**

Ian Passmore: Oh, dictated. I see.

David Effron: I dictate it. I do that in *Magic Flute* Overture, too.

Ian Passmore: I do the same exact thing for the same reason.

David Effron: My colleague [Arthur Fagen] had a better idea, actually. He goes [*singing and conducting mm. 299-300*], so they play on the down beat.<sup>37</sup>

Ian Passmore: Oh, because it's going to end up sounding like a pickup anyway.

---

<sup>37</sup> The instruction is the same as in footnote 28 above, except the “pick-up” to m. 300 is now played on the downbeat of m. 300. The aural result is the same. This is a useful tool for many Classical and late Classical works that begin with fractional upbeats, such as the slow introduction to Mozart’s *Magic Flute* Overture or the slow introduction to Beethoven’s Second Symphony. You are essentially instructing the orchestra to play a fractional “pick-up” *on* the beat, rather than before it.

David Effron: That's right. He was going to take over *Magic Flute*. I was released to do a gig; and I conducted two performances and then he was going to come in.

Anyway, as I was saying, that *fermata* I dictate like this: (*singing and conducting mm. 299-300*).

Ian Passmore: The *fermata* going into the downbeat of m. 300?

David Effron: Yeah, and then people will say, "that isn't a sixteenth-note, what you're doing." That's probably true, but I still do it because I lost faith in being able to do this [*conducting as in footnote 28*] and have them catch on.

Ian Passmore: Especially assuming that we're talking about a student orchestra.

David Effron: Yeah. Probably with a professional orchestra, I don't dictate it; I just go [*conducting as in footnote 28*]. Okay, that's the way that goes. Also, it's important to find moments of relaxation in this first movement, because it can be...

Ian Passmore: ...over-driven?

David Effron: Yeah, and especially with young people because they're usually in overdrive anyway, so it's hard for them to relax.

Ian Passmore: It's easier for young people to play fast and loud.

David Effron: Yeah, that's right. Example is m. 309. You have to build again and that's hard. The rate of how you build something is an important factor for all orchestras (Example 6.8). If an orchestra sees "crescendo" they're going to be too loud much too soon, because some composers have "crescendo" written over an eight-bar period, but they don't keep writing "crescendo." With young people, and even with a professional orchestra that isn't quite pacing a crescendo, it's good to take the eight-bar phrase and say, "in the first bar you play *pianissimo*, and then crescendo just a little to *piano* in the third bar; fifth bar, *mezzo forte*," and so forth.

Example 6.8: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 304-329, dynamic pacing in mm. 309-323

### Example 6.8, continued

Ian Passmore: So that they have concrete markers.

David Effron: Yeah. That will solve the problem. Then you hope with young people that the next time they see “crescendo” over an eight-bar period, they will individually and collectively use the same tool that they did before.

Ian Passmore: Beethoven is often specific about that sort of thing.

David Effron: Yeah, that’s right.

Ian Passmore: A few bars after that where he often will write “*pianissimo sempre*” or something along those lines.

David Effron: Or even more to the point is at m. 358—it’s a long crescendo. They go crescendo *poco a poco* for six bars up to *fortissimo* (Example 6.9). What is the rate of crescendo? Sometimes a good trick for a young conductor (I don’t know if it’s a trick) is to have the basses and cellos—for instance, in a passage of long crescendo—have them crescendo before the upper strings. Or

sometimes you do the opposite, the upper strings crescendo in bar 4 but the basses wait until bar 6. Then if you do it that way, all of a sudden from bar six, it's really strong. It gives the illusion of being a stronger crescendo by having the instruments, the lower or the upper, crescendo at different times. It works very well.

The other thing that's important here is when you have basses and cellos playing unison octaves or unison in a piece. It's really often, especially with a student orchestra (it doesn't happen in a professional orchestra so much), they [students] don't understand that they need a foundation. Who should give the foundation? It's double bass, not the cello. It's [cello] a lighter instrument.

In a situation with unison octaves, it's important for the young conductor to tell the cellos and basses that the cellos are going to take it easy. They know they're supposed to crescendo, but they generally try to give so much sound that the sound becomes ugly. That can happen. Let the basses do it. They have the kind of instruments that they can play louder, and it sounds good and they support the cellos. The blend you get is terrific. That's a lesson for young conductors. It's at bar 358 and subsequently, that's where that happens.

**Example 6.9: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 356-364**

The image displays a musical score for Ludwig van Beethoven's Symphony No. 7, first movement, measures 356-364. The score is written for a full orchestra, with staves for strings, woodwinds, and brass. The key signature is D major (two sharps). The tempo is marked 'Allegretto'. The score shows a crescendo marked 'cresc. poco a poco' across multiple staves. The music features a prominent melody in the upper strings, with the basses and cellos providing a strong foundation. The score is presented in a standard musical notation format, with notes, rests, and dynamic markings clearly visible.

### Example 6.9, continued



Ian Passmore: What do you do in a passage like m. 364? When it's a *tutti fortissimo*, as is so common in Beethoven, these sort of block dynamics; but what you really want to hear is the cello and bass line, which is the line of the most rhythmic importance (Example 6.10).

### Example 6.10: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 363-370, *tutti fortissimo*

David Effron: Right. I don't think that specific passage presents a problem because the basses have so much strength and they start very high



up. If there is a problem, the easiest thing to do is tell the violins and violas to play *forte* and not *fortissimo*, then there's no problem. But I've never had a problem with such a passage. These kinds of passages are always played at the frog. You will see young people play them on all parts of the bow, and upside down, bow in *col legno*, and all kinds of stuff that makes absolutely no sense. You have to address all of these things.

Here's a place, m. 413, where I had delayed the crescendo in the lower strings, but the upper strings crescendo sooner. That's what I was talking about before. Then I have them play *pianissimo* at m. 413, at m. 417, *piano-crescendo*; at m. 419 *mezzo forte*; and *forte* at m. 421.

Ian Passmore:                      Until they get to their *fortissimo* (Example 6.11).

**Example 6.11: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. I, mm. 409-423, dynamic pacing from mm. 413-423**



### Example 6.11, continued

David Effron: Those are the problems in the first movement. Second movement: the problems—well, not “problems”—but the articulation has to be explained to the orchestra because there are many variations of playing [*singing mm. 3-4*]. Some of those notes are leaned on more, and other conductors do it the opposite way (Example 6.12).

### Example 6.12: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. II, mm. 1-6, opening rhythm

A very good thing to say, which is applicable here, is the fact that this is like a string quartet. There just happens to be more cellos and more violins and more violas than a string quartet. Since the majority young people can relate better to chamber music... They like it better [than orchestra], I guess.... That’s a terrible thing to say, but it’s true. Unfortunately, it’s because of education and private teachers who really do harm to their students by not recognizing that orchestra playing is not much different than chamber music playing. Plus, the fact that from a practical standpoint, they’re going to play in an orchestra anyhow, if they’re going to make a living.

If you take out all the people who don't want to play in an orchestra who have been influenced by their teachers at a young age, you wouldn't have enough violinists to fill an orchestra. That's a very terrible thing and a selfish thing to do because the value of the orchestra is such that it may help you make a living someday, more so than other avenues.

At any rate, the students do relate, in a way, better to chamber music, as far as what gives them joy. I often say this passage needs to be played like a string quartet, not an orchestra. Of course it's like an orchestra, but they hear the words "string quartet," and the sound changes—all of a sudden, you see their ears perk up. They begin to listen in a way that would be the same in an orchestra, but somehow there's a disconnect in their minds. Not with everybody, though. Anyhow, this second movement is a study in balancing an overgrown string quartet.

Ian Passmore: I want to ask you about a common thing that comes up—particularly in this movement, because of the tempo—and it gets dealt with differently by basically every conductor. How do you deal with the viola and cello, what look like grace notes in measure 29 (Example 6.13)?

**Example 6.13: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. II, mm. 27-29**



David Effron: The question will be is it on the beat, or after the beat, or before the beat? Style-wise, it's on the beat. That's how I deal with it, because I know through reading that Beethoven probably wanted it to fall on the beat, not before the beat. It's part of the melody. It looks like a grace note on paper, but...

Ian Passmore: ...it needs to be played melodically.

David Effron: Melodically, yes. That's a good question because you hear many different interpretations.

Ian Passmore: Like a lot of these Classical or late-Classical symphonies, the form is as we would expect it to be: an opening movement with a slow introduction and sonata form, a second movement that's essentially a theme and variations...

David Effron: Right. That's true.

Ian Passmore: Which is another thing, wouldn't you would agree, that can be taught through this symphony.

David Effron: It's a typical form of that...

Ian Passmore: ...time and genre.

David Effron: Yeah, and that's good.

Ian Passmore: Another important thing for a student orchestra to know.

David Effron: Of course.

Measure 117—there's a beautiful clarinet solo (Example 6.14). How does the conductor want it phrased? How does the conductor show what he wants? How do student orchestras respond to that showing? Some conductors don't show anything. In a professional situation with a good orchestra, you probably want to stay out of their way. The young orchestra, you want to get in their way because they don't know...

**Example 6.14: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. II, mm. 117-120, solo clarinet**



Ian Passmore: ...how to shape it.

David Effron: They need, yes, how to shape it. They need that. They don't have the experience of playing it many times. The clarinets don't have even the experience having worked with the bassoon players. If you work with somebody, it's like a team. After a long time, it comes naturally because it's like two guards on a basketball team when they do no-look passes; and you would think they, by

watching them, that they don't have any contact, but they have tremendous contact, and they know what the other guy is going to do because they've worked with him a long time.

It's very simple. You can go through all these pieces and say what's important and what are problematic parts, but it's really about having a conductor who knows the symphonies, knows the possibilities of what can be done, knows where the players...I'm talking in an educational situation... knows where the players are going to have issues, knows how to correct them. The role of the conductor... We can talk about the conductors too, right?

Ian Passmore: Oh yeah, please do.

David Effron: The role of the conductor in an academic situation is much, much more difficult than in a professional situation. Why? Because you have to explain and/or give everything physically. You have to have a tremendous knowledge of the score to be able to do that. But when I watch many professional conductors, I'm trying to figure out "what do they want the orchestra to say?" It's not good, because all their beats look the same—there's no variation. I'm not talking about seasoned, great conductors. I'm talking about rank-and-file conductors who are actually working in the field.

Ian Passmore: In situations like that, that's when a good professional orchestra knows when it's time for them to take over.

David Effron: That's exactly right. I've been blessed that I had the opportunity to teach in the best schools in this country. Even in the best schools, you have to explain so much more, because it's the first time they've done these things. I know some people kind of look down upon "school conductors." "There are *maestri*, there are conductors, and then there are academics." Many people feel like the reason the guy's teaching in a school is because he can't get a job in the profession.

Ian Passmore: Couldn't cut it in the "real world."

David Effron: Or he's not good enough. I actually think that the conductor in the school has to have more things at his fingertips than the professional conductor, because professional orchestras basically don't need as much information. It doesn't make them a bad or worse conductor, but you can't do that in a school. You just can't

do that in a school or you're not giving the students what they need. You have to know so much.

I was very lucky because I always kept one foot in the profession and one foot in the school. I thought it was very important. I give this advice to young conductors: anything you conduct is going to help you improve, but if you can, have a balance of many different avenues, many different possibilities. Conduct symphony, conduct professional groups, conduct semi-professional groups, conduct community orchestras, conduct opera, conduct students. That's going to make you a better conductor. It really will make you a better conductor.

I learned more, quicker, when I made the transition from solely professional work to academic work because I had to learn much more in a specific way in order to be helpful to the students.

David Effron: That's a topic for another dissertation because that is so important. What really is required for a good conductor, for a good conductor in a school?

You see a lot of them, they aren't very good. A lot of it is because they're looked down upon because it's not professional.

Ian Passmore: The question, "does a good conductor necessarily make a good conducting teacher?" That could easily be turned the other way. Do the world's highest-level professional conductors necessarily make good academic conductors? Oftentimes that's "no," because they're not used to having to give the sort of information that they would need to give to inexperienced players.

David Effron: That's very true. I've seen them. I've seen some of the most well-known conductors in the world come into an academic institution, which they hardly have ever done, and they're lost. They want to correct it. They can hear they need to correct it, but sometimes they really don't know what to say because they never had to say it before, except, "you're no good." They'd just start yelling at the students.

Ian Passmore: Because from that perspective, when they have to deal with something that they've never dealt with before, it's a lot easier to get frustrated and let that frustration take over. I think the clearest,

most visible exception to that today would be Gustavo Dudamel,<sup>38</sup> but he came up in a youth orchestra environment.

David Effron: Nobody else has come from that, in that same way.

Ian Passmore: Right. His background is with younger players and in education.

David Effron: And boy, what he did with them, it's just the most amazing thing. There are a lot of good youth orchestras, but that one... I heard a performance on YouTube of Mahler [Symphony No.] 1, I think, played in London with his orchestra. It was unbelievable.

Ian Passmore: Oh, it's stunning. They're better than a lot of the world's most well-known, fully professional orchestras.

David Effron: Absolutely. Now if you really know the pieces, some of the solo playing goes beyond what they should be doing; but, it's not at a level of the greatest kazoo player in the world because they're still young. The other thing, what Dudamel has done for music... I had an Uber driver in Miami last week who was from Venezuela. He asked me what I do, so I told him. "Oh, do you know Dudamel?" I gathered Dudamel is like a god in Venezuela, as well as he should be for what he's done. He can't go back to Venezuela now, though.

Ian Passmore: No, because of the political climate.

David Effron: We [the Uber driver and I] had a talk about the general political thing. The guy just threw up his hands: "that's Venezuela."

Ian Passmore: With all the talk about this year being the big Bernstein centennial, he's [Gustavo Dudamel] probably the closest thing I can imagine, in terms of the visibility of classical music in the mainstream media, and especially with young people... He's the closest thing to a sort of a Bernstein figure in the modern era for sure.

David Effron: Yeah, I don't know who number two would be—who the second guy is who's closest to Bernstein—because I don't think there is anybody, really. There are guys who do a good job in that kind of situation, but nothing like Bernstein and nothing like Dudamel.

---

<sup>38</sup> Gustavo Dudamel (b. 1981); Venezuelan conductor; Music Director, Los Angeles Philharmonic, 2009-present; Artistic Director, Simon Bolivar Youth Orchestra, 1999-present.

Ian Passmore: That's why I think, in terms of mainstream notoriety for classical music and young people, he's the clearest parallel.

David Effron: Also, how he learned all that... He [Dudamel] has a fairly big repertoire.

Ian Passmore: Yes, he does.

David Effron: I don't know how he learned it all, frankly, in Venezuela. But he sure knows the repertoire....

*[getting back to the subject at hand]* I like the fourth movement [of Beethoven's Seventh Symphony], and I'll tell you why. Because all the things that I've talked about in the first and second movements, about balance, rhythm—the things that are necessary to teach—they all come together in the last movement. If you've been successful in educating the students in the first and second movements, the last movement plays itself. I would do a test where I would have the students play the last movement at a rehearsal without a conductor, or a part of it without a conductor, because now you see, “did it stick about rhythm?” You have to have good rhythm—there are fast notes. That's why it's a good symphony to introduce to young people. The last movement is a culmination of those lessons.

Ian Passmore: There's a particular spot, if I can find it here, in the last movement, that is sort of typical of Beethoven. Actually, it pops up in the other movements too, this difference Beethoven often makes in his symphonies between a reiterated *sforzando* or a reiterated *fortissimo*, where oftentimes he'll put a string of identical dynamics, each time notated *fortissimo* one after the other. That's led some people to say, myself included, that that's not necessarily a dynamic marking for Beethoven, but it's really almost more of an articulation. How do you interpret the difference between *sforzando* or *fortissimo* (Example 6.15), or in the Seventh Symphony in particular, the famous triple *forte* that Beethoven uses, which also appears in the Eighth Symphony? That's sort of unique to Beethoven, right?



**Example 6.15: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. IV, mm. 312-323, *ff* vs. *sf***

David Effron:

Right. He always has a lot of *sforzandi* written, but not *sforzando-piano*, but it still means you relax after the initial attack. You don't come down to *piano*, but you anchor on the first note of the bar like this [*singing m. 321*], and then you relax [*singing m. 321*]. If it's *forte*, you don't relax. You play, but you don't play an accent either. You play [*singing m. 319*], all sustained *forte*.<sup>39</sup>

That's hard, because any time somebody sees a *forte* and they're coming from a lesser dynamic, they'll play an accent; but it's not an accent, unless it says *sforzando*. That's hard to get an orchestra to do, but it's necessary because he does write that way.

Ian Passmore:

What about the spots that I just mentioned in the Seventh and Eighth Symphonies? Which are famously the only symphonies in which Beethoven indicates a triple *forte* (Example 6.16).

<sup>39</sup> For *fortissimo* (and above), accent the beginning of the note and sustain the dynamic. For *sforzando*, accent the beginning of the note, then allow for a slightly dynamic relaxation immediately following the initial attack.

**Example 6.16: Ludwig van Beethoven, Symphony No. 7, mvmt. IV, m. 427, first *fff***



David Effron:

Triple *forte*. That's like—I explain it to the orchestra—like a release, like a bomb. It's a release of frustration with sound, that you can never get enough sound. Finally, you just... At the culmination of the piece, what you do is have an explosion. Every professional musician knows that's there, so they [conductors] don't have to make a big deal about it. But with students, you have to make a difference between the loudest you can play, and then play louder; the conductor probably should make a big gesture of some kind in order to indicate that. That's very important to have. You've got to have the triple *forte*. He wouldn't have written that unless he wanted a triple *forte*.

I can't tell you what Beethoven's ideas of double *forte* and triple *forte* were. How loud? I don't know. Also, the instruments were a little bit different.

Ian Passmore:

Yeah, they were.

- David Effron: So, it isn't the same as today's orchestra, but because a triple *forte* can be really, really strong. It's *tutti* in that triple *forte*; you have horns and trumpets. The best thing about that symphony and the last movement is that there is a place where you just go bonkers. You have to make that difference, that's right.
- Ian Passmore: I know it's kind of one of those things—I know I've said it to young players, too—that when you're playing those *fortes* and the *fortissimos*, part of your mind has to be on the triple *forte* to come.
- David Effron: On that triple *forte*. Right.
- Ian Passmore: Because if you show all your cards in the very beginning...
- David Effron: Right, it can only be so much. That's why you need to make a difference between *forte*, *fortissimo*, and *fortississimo*.
- I don't know if this helps you or if this answers the questions.
- Ian Passmore: It's just meant as a sort of a general guide, that gives us a concrete way to explain some of the stuff about rehearsing and conducting by using specific, representative pieces. For now, let's move on to *Finlandia* and anything you might have to say about that piece.
- David Effron: Well, I already indicated that it has many issues that are similar in many orchestras—dynamic issues, blending issues, balance issues—especially with the brass. I defy one to get a student orchestra and have them play with perfect balance in the brass without rehearsing it. It won't happen. Here for example, at the Allegro before F is a *sforzando*, and then *piano*, and then *molto* crescendo. You don't always hear it played the way it's printed. So, *sforzando-piano*, and then in four notes, you crescendo a lot, again, to *sforzando* (Example 6.17). Those things are important to point out.

**Example 6.17: Jean Sibelius, *Finlandia*, mm. 95-98, Allegro preceding Rehearsal F**

95 Allegro. M. M. ♩ = 104

The musical score for measures 95-98 of Sibelius's *Finlandia* is presented in a standard orchestral format. It includes staves for woodwinds (flutes, oboes, bassoons), strings (violins, violas, cellos, double basses), and piano. The key signature is B-flat major (two flats). The tempo is marked 'Allegro' with a metronome of 104. The score includes dynamic markings such as *f*, *p*, *cresc.*, and *molto*. The music features a prominent bass line in the lower strings and a melodic line in the upper strings.

Allegro. M. M. ♩ = 104

A lot of times, especially with young orchestras, the specific dynamics of a piece go by the wayside. They're important, and that's what this piece will help people with.

Apropos of having these discussions, I talked friend of mine last night. I don't know how we got on the subject.... We talk about a lot of things, but one of the things that came up was different types of musicians. He was telling me about one of his students, who he thinks is a brilliant guy, a young guy. He's a composer, by the way.

One of his students is extremely gifted as a composer, but incredibly involved with chord structure and form in a piece. That's a good thing for a composer to be involved with. But what this guy lacks is the instinct of a style and what that means, and the ability to be creative within a certain style. He can only see that the chord goes here and there, but that's all. Then we were talking about the kind of musician I think I am and I know he is, and lots of my colleagues are.

We were talking about a natural musician versus one who doesn't have natural instincts. You can still be a good musician. There's a lot of literature to explain things, but he and I... It's difficult for me to talk about these pieces in terms of specifics about how you proceed in correcting things or what is important to correct, because I don't think in terms of "everything is carved in stone." A lot of musicians think every day is different. You don't necessarily solve a musical problem on Wednesday the same as you did on Tuesday. There's a whole world out there. It depends on your road in life. Yes, I know the rhythm in Beethoven's Seventh [Symphony] is problematic, so if you ask me what I would rehearse and why, I can tell you that.

But in my heart and soul, it doesn't feel right. It's like the problems in the beginning of the Beethoven [Seventh Symphony], which are pretty obvious. It's not worthy of writing down. In a way, it would be for kindergarten people to write down, "this is what you have to look at." It's pretty obvious. A musician, a natural musician, doesn't worry about these things. They are problematic, and he or she recognizes it, but we go a lot on instinct. That instinct has grown through the years. I've been told, and I think my friend also has, that if I only were a little bit more intellectual towards music, I'd be a genius. I'm not quite sure what that means. I don't want to be more intellectual. I want to be more honest about what I feel.

Okay, so this exercise is a little bit out of my realm because I don't even think in terms of that. Did that make sense to you?

Ian Passmore: Yeah, I understand completely.

David Effron: But I'm happy to do it. It's just I don't think it's that valuable for anybody.

It's sort of like saying, "what made you do that?" "Why did you choose that tempo?" My answer, probably most of the time, would be, "because I know the works of Beethoven and because at that moment, I felt that was the right tempo." Or I might even say, "what do you mean?" You know?

Ian Passmore: No, I do understand.

David Effron: But I know not every musician understands that.

Ian Passmore: I don't know if I told you, but in the way most children want to be firemen or something like that, I wanted to be a conductor.

David Effron: But you didn't mean on the New York Central Railroad?  
*[laughter]*

Ian Passmore: No, but I'm sure that's what most people thought—or still think—I meant. *[laughter]*

David Effron: That's why I'm just clarifying.

Ian Passmore: No, no. But in the last several years, when someone's asked about a tempo or why I did something, I've often found myself saying, "what do you mean?" "What did I do?" Because it just feels right in the moment.

David Effron: But in the eyes of others, you probably come off as a nitwit, because evidently, you're supposed to know. But aren't music and theater... Isn't it a natural outgrowth of the character of the guy who's creating the music and of the person who is creating it for audiences? It's an outgrowth of that person's feelings.

Ian Passmore: Yeah, I think so, and that's one of the big responsibilities or crossroads we have to face as conductors. Because it's [part of] our job to know about Beethoven so we can make informed decisions.

David Effron: We should know about the composer and the time that composer lived and the markings that the composer, as a rule, puts in the scores. Yes, we should know all that. But how I tell somebody to phrase something is a mystery to me, how they can't know. I tell them, and then they mimic what I told them. I don't find that a very good way to make music, if you don't have the tools or the risk or the interest. You just have to go for it.

Ian Passmore: Yeah, and that's the difference between a sort of innately musical...

David Effron: "Innate" is the right word, for sure.

Ian Passmore: ...person, and a musician who is just very well-studied.

David Effron: Yes, and since music itself is so personal, just well-studied isn't enough; because I see a lot of performances—not big-name artists, particularly—but that are middle-of-the-road. I heard a pianist the other night...Man, the guy could play faster than anybody, and it was natural. Except what he chose to do was so far away from the style and so wrong with tempo, that it didn't make any sense. That's the opposite. That's like not knowing much, but just playing what you feel. You can't do one without the other, but you have to be emotional and not completely intellectual.

Ian Passmore: Yeah. I don't want to generalize too much, but I'm going to anyway right now.

David Effron: Yeah, do.

Ian Passmore: In terms of the standard orchestral repertoire, I think that's why the Romantic composers (the nineteenth-century, late eighteenth-century, and a handful of early twentieth-century composers) resonate so well with audiences. Rather than the *avant-garde*, more "mathematical" music that you can also find in the twentieth century.

David Effron: And there's nothing wrong with that. Now don't forget, Stravinsky was a failure in many of the pieces that he wrote, especially the most famous one.

What does that mean? That guy was a genius, yet his music wasn't necessarily for everybody. But it does reflect a "just go for it" mentality. For him, that was natural, I guess. Without Stravinsky, music wouldn't have gone forward. That would be horrible.

Ian Passmore: *[getting back to Sibelius's Finlandia]* I wonder if you would agree that one of the things about *Finlandia* is that it's probably the best full orchestral piece for students in order to introduce them to Sibelius's sound world, which is obviously not the same as

Beethoven's sound world, and it's not the same as Brahms or Tchaikovsky or anything else. It's a unique sound.

David Effron: But do you think that this piece is representative of that? I would say that the symphonies are representative of his sound. The Second Symphony—not the last movement so much, but the rest of it—the Fifth Symphony...

Ian Passmore: Certainly the Fifth.

David Effron: But I don't think *Finlandia* is representative of his harmonic sound. Somewhat his melodic sound, yes. If you didn't know this was Sibelius, you could easily call it some other composer because it doesn't really sound like typical Sibelius.

Ian Passmore: No, certainly not akin to the Fifth Symphony, but there are some tinges of things that are uniquely Sibelius.

David Effron: Yes, that could be.

Ian Passmore: Now, I'm certainly not saying that this is a sort of "Sibelius in a nutshell" piece, because it's not.

David Effron: Not in the way that Beethoven's Seventh [Symphony] is quintessential Beethoven.

Ian Passmore: Absolutely.

David Effron: That, you can't deny.

Ian Passmore: There are things [in the Seventh Symphony] that you can find in all the [Beethoven] symphonies, perhaps barring the Ninth.

David Effron: And even some in the Ninth.

Ian Passmore: Yeah. Commonalities that can all be found all over the Seventh.

Let's move on to Mozart and the famous "Count's Aria" from *The Marriage of Figaro*. Again, just using the pieces as a vehicle to discuss more general things.

Let's discuss the things that are typical of having to use an orchestra as accompaniment for a singer, and the conducting



issues. At some point, you had told me that every conducting audition should include the accompaniment of a singer. Why do you feel that's important? Then, we'll talk through a couple of these short opera excerpts.

David Effron:

It's important because it represents an entirely different way of conducting. You can't conduct an opera like you do a symphony, or you wouldn't get very far into it. That's why sometimes you see really good symphony conductors who fail conducting operas, because they're not used to the things; and they don't understand the things you have to do in an opera which make it different from a symphony.

Mozart's opera arias aren't terribly different than conducting a Mozart symphony, except you have a singer. The difference can be that the singer wants a certain tempo that is compatible to his or her voice. You can't insist like you can with an orchestra about choices like that. You have to be an objective collaborator in an opera. Also, this excerpt has recitative in the beginning, which is very different from conducting the aria itself—the aria isn't so stop-and-go. Symphonic conducting, it obviously goes on without stopping much. This recitative, however, is stop-and-go; and you have to have a certain real fluidity and confidence in your technique; because if you don't, somebody's not going to understand what you're beating, because it stops for a while, then it goes again. It's a completely different approach to conducting opera than it is symphony.

One might say Mozart is so simple compared to, say, a Britten opera. You can play a Mozart symphony with an orchestra without a conductor much easier than you can play this aria, or any Mozart aria that has singers and recitative and all of that. It's also important to know the text and understand the way the text is presented. Also, it's a collaboration. You used the word "accompaniment," I think.

Yes, in a sense, you accompany the singer; but it's also—especially with the great opera composers—it's a collaboration, because the orchestra really is as important as the artist on stage. If you don't know the text, there's a lot of answers that you don't know what the singer is saying; and you don't understand the inflections, so you can't very well be a collaborator.

Ian Passmore: The orchestra can't support them in the way that they need to.

David Effron: No, and you need to explain that to the orchestra sometimes, about what they're supposed to do in regard to being in a duet with a singer. That's what it basically is—it's a duet. An orchestra is equally as important. It's very funny to me. First of all, the opera conductor in the theater has become almost, compared to what it used to be, irrelevant. It's become a Stage Director's world. Then after that, it has become a General Manager's world. The conductor used to be the person. I grew up in this atmosphere where the conductor was the leader of all the rehearsals and a collaborator with the Stage Director. Nowadays, you go to an opera company to perform an opera; and the idea, they think, is that you can prepare it musically with singers you've never worked with before in two rehearsals, like six hours, whereas we would have a week at least, sometimes two weeks for just music and nothing else.

Once the Stage Director starts his or her work, it becomes that the conductor really has very little to say. They don't want to hear from the conductor. Therefore, the musical values of opera have become less important. You still have great singers, but it's a different kind of presentation. Much more important is the drama. Yes, years ago people used to come to the front of the stage and stand there and sing. That's equally as bad. As protest to that, they became real actors. It's because of that the musical values suffered. They still do. To conduct opera nowadays, for somebody like me, is certainly not as much fun as I had before.

Ian Passmore: You hear now, with European productions, the derogatory term, "Euro-trash."<sup>40</sup>

David Effron: Yeah, "Euro-trash."

Ian Passmore: It's become less about the score and the music itself, and more about a sort of shock-and-awe factor.

---

<sup>40</sup> "Euro-trash" is a derogatory term sometimes used in reference to modern European opera productions, specifically those in which the setting, characters, and staging have been set in a gratuitously sexual and/or violent (or otherwise offensive) fashion.

David Effron: There is no boundary; there's no line you can't cross. I once did a *Barber of Seville* that was set in Cuba. Okay, I don't think it's so bad to set it in Cuba, although it's not what the composer intended. But then all the characters became Castro-like because this was during the time of his being in the headlines. Didn't make any sense to me. You just said, "now you're going to be a woman who's a servant in a Cuban household." Well, that changes the whole opera. It changes how people look. It changes how they walk on stage. It might even change the tempo of some things. It was in the storm scene of *Barber of Seville*, they [Stage Director] portrayed it not as a rainstorm—although the music is a rainstorm; it sounds like that—it was like a heatwave without the rain in this production. It didn't make sense to me and people thought it was great, they thought it was fine. I couldn't understand it. Some things are good, but not everything. It all depends on how much you want to change and how it affects the piece.

When conducting singers in an opera, you basically let them feel like they're leading you, and in a sense, they are; but it's not so clear-cut, because you're always in control, and you're always leading them with even the smallest gesture if they get way off—or if they get a little off-track—but you want them to feel like they're controlling it.

Ian Passmore: Like they have all the freedom in the world.

David Effron: Not only all the freedom, but they have all the choices. The happiest singers are those who come off the stage and say, "that conductor really supported me." Well, you are supporting them, and you're not throwing it down their throat. On the other hand, you're always so focused on them that you're controlling it with just little gestures. They say sometimes you have to be big for things like choruses, but it's a different kind of conducting really.

Ian Passmore: What about doing this piece with an inexperienced orchestra and singer versus a professional orchestra that's played it many times?

David Effron: Look, every student knows a little about the style of Mozart. You can't go to a music school without knowing a little. Also, it's technically easier for everybody to play. It's only in the stop-and-go passages where the students don't know. Even with some professional players, who are members of orchestras but don't play

opera, it still can be somewhat problematic; but generally in this style, it's not so different. You can put together a Mozart opera with good students very quickly. What's lacking is the orchestra's experience. Professional opera orchestras are very aware of the singers and they listen to them, and they tailor their own playing to what they're hearing from the stage. While a student orchestra can't do that, at least not initially, until they have many performances to allow them to do that.

Ian Passmore: And unless they're taught to, which is why you said it's important to let them know their role in that collaborative relationship with the singer and their role in collaboration with the text.

David Effron: Right. In an opera like *La Boheme*, in that style—after Mozart—let's just say later operas that are so stop-and-go and so much more intricate with the orchestration, there's a real difference. An orchestra that knows it, there's no issue; but an orchestra who's never played *La Boheme*, especially students, there are real big issues; because there are many more tempo changes within a short period, and students don't like tempo changes. They don't respond to them like a professional orchestra does.

Ian Passmore: Beyond that, Puccini is almost... The only orchestral equivalent is maybe Mahler, in terms of how explicit he is with the markings that he puts in the music.

David Effron: Yeah, there are a lot of markings.

Ian Passmore: It's very fussy sort of markings and making all those details come to life with the student orchestras is so difficult.

David Effron: Mahler went way beyond that, even.

Ian Passmore: Yes, absolutely.

David Effron: But yes, he does put a lot of markings in there. Also, the variation of tempos that you can get in several performances is much greater than you get in Mozart. Yes, somebody may sing a Mozart aria a little faster, a little slower; but in the Italian repertoire—Puccini and Verdi—there's a whole gamut of tempo possibilities. As a conductor, you have to be sensitive to that, and you have to be cognizant of that, because it can't always be the same performance.

There are too many variables in this. That's why opera is hard to conduct.

Ian Passmore: One thing I'd like to ask you about opera conducting in general—but especially in Mozart and things like recitative—is something we often discussed in our conducting classes: the “neutral position.”

Why is that important for a conductor to really master when they're working with a singer, or even a soloist?

David Effron: Especially in the recitative, that comes into being. The neutral position is one where you are on the first beat. This is a neutral position. In a recitative, you always go back to a neutral position. Sometimes it's on a different beat; it could be on the second [beat]. But it simply means you wait and you don't do anything until the time comes.

It's not flowing like you do in many instances, but this is like... Say there's a chord on [beat] three. This is the neutral position for that [*demonstrates*].

Ian Passmore: So you're essentially just sitting on the second beat, waiting to go.

David Effron: Yes, and it means don't move. Here comes the chord [*sings*].<sup>41</sup>

There's another instance where I would use the neutral beat. It refers to when you go back to the first beat, to the neutral position, where you haven't done anything yet, right before the upbeat. Say you have a chord on [beat] one and you just played a chord on [beat] three. Here's the chord on [beat] three [*demonstrates*]*—now* you have a chord on [beat] one. There's nothing on [beat] four, so you go back to the neutral position, which is neither [beat] four nor [beat] one. You have to go back to this neutral position in order to get...

---

<sup>41</sup> The so-called “neutral position” is an extremely useful tool for conducting opera—particularly passages of extended recitative—and extended instrumental solos, including *concerti*. The baton comes to rest on the beat immediately preceding the next vocal or instrumental action. In the case of Mozart (Example 6.18), the conductor should mark the downbeat, then move immediately to the second beat and wait for the Count to finish his first line: “*Hai già vinta la causa.*” On “*causa*,” the conductor should move from beat two (the neutral position in this instance) to beat three in tempo, thus allowing the orchestra to respond as written.

- Ian Passmore: So you can give an upbeat.
- David Effron: Yeah, in order to give the upbeat to [beat] one; because so many people would go, “chord,” *[demonstrates]* and then they go like this *[demonstrates]*. But it’s not time for the chord, so you’re stuck up here or you’re stuck somewhere. That’s the real meaning of the neutral beat, where you go back to this position and you don’t move until the time is right to move.<sup>42</sup> That’s all that means. Because so many people in conducting opera, they just go on and they don’t know what to do until it’s too late. Then, the worst thing you can do with an orchestra who’s playing opera is beat...
- Ian Passmore: ...jerky.
- David Effron: Yeah, jerky, or just they don’t know exactly when anything is coming. The neutral position means take a rest and stop. When it’s time to go, I’m right in the place I need to be. If I’m going to go to two, I’m there. If I’m going to go to three, I’m there. That’s why it’s called the neutral beat.
- Ian Passmore: I think a really good example of that would be the very first entrance of the orchestra in the “Count’s Aria” [from *The Marriage of Figaro*] in the recitative: “*Hai già vinta la causa*” *[singing mm. 1-2]* (Example 6.18).
- David Effron: Yeah. “*Hai già vinta la...*” *[sings and demonstrates mm. 1-2]*. You stay on [beat] two.
- The neutral beat becomes two, right before the beat they’re going to play. It’s after [beat] three, right? *[sings and demonstrates mm. 1-2]* I’m doing it in slow motion.

---

<sup>42</sup> As before, the neutral position is a purposefully non-committal “beat.” Maestro Effron uses the hypothetical example of two 4/4 measures in which there is an orchestra chord on beat three, followed by a rest on beat four—but in which a singer or soloist maybe have material of musical interest—followed by another orchestra chord on the downbeat of the following bar. In this instance, the conductor should beat the orchestra chord on beat three, then freeze until the singer or soloist is ready to move on. Then, the conductor need only to lift his/her baton again (in tempo) to serve as the upbeat the following chord on beat one.

**Example 6.18: W. A. Mozart, *Le Nozze di Figaro*, Act 3, No. 17, “Hai già vinta la causa!,” mm. 1-4**

The musical score for Example 6.18 shows the first four measures of the aria "Hai già vinta la causa!". The staves are arranged vertically: Violino I, Violino II, Viola, IL CONTE DER GRAF (soprano), and Violoncello Basso. The lyrics for the singer are in Italian and German. The Italian lyrics are: "Hai già vin-ta la cau-sa! co-sa sen-to! inqual lac-cio ca-de-a?". The German lyrics are: "Der Prozess schon gewonnen? ha! was hör' ich? al-so war dies ein Fallstrick?". The score includes dynamic markings such as *f* (forte) and *sfz* (sforzando).

That's why you have to know the words, too. I've seen conductors, young conductors, who didn't know the text, so they didn't know exactly when to come in. They were going by the notes that the guy sang, but that's not what you go on. You really have to know the text.

Ian Passmore: I know a lot of conductors, myself included, that will circle the syllable or the word that you need to start moving on.

David Effron: By then it's too late, sometimes.

Ian Passmore: But it depends on the singer and all sorts of things.

David Effron: Yeah, lots of things.

Ian Passmore: I have to re-mark it every time.

David Effron: This is [*singing mm. 1-2*]. Here I am over here, [*singing mm. 2-3*]. Here I am neutral, [*singing mm. 3-4*]. That last one, when you're going from that *sforzando* to the next thing that comes, which is a resolution in G major [*singing mm. 3-4*]. There, you do move. Why? Because you don't have time for anything else. There's not enough time, so you'd have to do this [*singing mm. 3-4*]. Here, I want the neutral [*singing mm. 3-4*]. I'd have to do that to catch the singer. Each case is a little different, but you don't have any extra movement that you don't need. That's the whole point. Because

orchestras, they want fluidity, and they don't want—like you said—jerkiness. You're going to two really fast, and then you go slow, and "oh my goodness..." That doesn't work for an orchestra.<sup>43</sup>

Ian Passmore: No, and you and I talked about one of the things an orchestra likes: spontaneity.

David Effron: Yeah, that's true.

Ian Passmore: It's important that we point out that this is different, in terms of the gesture and when they need to play, what they want is predictability.

David Effron: Yes, and if you do this aria three nights in a row... If the general concept is a little different each night, it can be quite... In later works, like Puccini and Verdi, it can have even more leeway to be different. Orchestra players I know who play opera all the time would love to have some flexibility. If you do it differently—or even with voicings, bring out another instrument—they really like that because that sort of gets rid of the boredom of playing. As great as the music is, to play it every night for many, many nights can get boring. It keeps it alive and interesting. Players appreciate even in the strict passages, they appreciate a little bit of flexibility.

That's what I was saying about people like me who are spontaneous by nature. If I did something differently on Tuesday night than I did Monday night, I don't even think of it like "this is going to be different." It's just where I was emotionally at that moment. That's what guides it. Players like that. At least that's either true or they were lying to me, because when I was young (I was very young) and I worked with guys who had been doing orchestra playing for thirty years. They took me under their wing. They liked me. They thought I... I think I've told conductors I'm

---

<sup>43</sup> Here, Maestro Effron is essentially talking through the first four measures of the "Count's Aria," combining the different uses of the neutral position from footnotes 35 and 36. In mm. 1-2, the use of the neutral position is identical. The conductor marks beat one, then waits on beat two (the neutral position in this example) until "*causa*" and "*sento*" respectively. Upon the singing of that text, the conductor beats three in tempo and the orchestra should respond as written. In m. 3, the conductor moves very quickly through beat one and comes to rest on beat two (the neutral position in this example, as well), in order to "catch" the Count on "*lac-[cio.]*" Once the orchestra meets him [the Count] with their *sforzando-piano*, augmented sixth chord, the conductor should wait yet again on beat four, until the Count is ready to move on to his resolution in G major: [*ca-]de-a*.



very down-to-earth, basically. I don't have any airs about me. That was a detriment to my career, and it also was a huge advantage because to the players, I was a real human being to them and not some kind of fake.

Ian Passmore: The maestro that's sort of above it all.

David Effron: But then I had qualities of making-music that were like a maestro's supposed to be. These older players took me under their wing and they appreciated my work. They also felt it was okay to tell me in private if they saw something that, because of my youth, I was not doing—something that was either wrong or could be better. They knew, because they knew these operas, and I took it as a compliment that they would share with me what was a better way to conduct. Once we started working, I was the maestro, but the minute I got off the podium, I was somebody that they really respected and wanted to help.

One guy told me—and it didn't happen that often—but I remember one time where this bassoon player was holding a long note. He was one of these bassoon players in New York who freelanced, but he was very famous. Everybody knew him and they always wanted him to play. He came in to play and I had a rehearsal for something, and he held a long note while everybody cut off. He held a long note. The note was supposed to cut off on three, so you go like this [*demonstrates release using baton only*], or you go like this [*demonstrates release using the left hand*]. Somehow—I don't know, in my youth or something—I gave something, but it was really unclear exactly where the cutoff was, and this guy raised his hand.

He said, "David, I'll never cut off unless you give it to me. I'll hold this note for six years." That was kind of strong, like, "you idiot." So I learned right there; I never made that same mistake again. With all my cutoffs, I try to be really clear in some form or another.

Then in opera, choruses really need cutoffs, and many opera conductors forget to give it or they don't give it at all. They don't know when to cut off. There are a lot of issues that one really doesn't think about that, if you're really fortunate, you got guys

behind you who've done this longer than you have and they'll give you good advice.

Ian Passmore: One of the important things to tease out of this is that—in terms of opera conducting and working with a singer/soloist—your overriding philosophy is it's not you and the orchestra and the singer and the soloist as separate entities. Rather, the orchestra and the soloist and the conductor are all part of one collaborative fabric.

David Effron: And yet they have different needs psychologically, musically, technically, and it's the good opera conductor or the experienced opera conductor who recognizes that. In order to be one entity and collaborative, you treat each one a little bit different. In other words, you don't necessarily talk to a singer like you do to an orchestra person, because their needs are different. Some people are very good singer conductors, but they're terrible with the orchestra in an opera. Some people are good in the opera, but they don't know what the singer needs really, so they just go on like it's an orchestra concert.

Ian Passmore: That's when you really have to have a handle on the psychology, and how to read the room and deal with the different egos.

David Effron: In today's world, that becomes primary because of many reasons, which we all know about. The world has changed that way, and it's a good thing, but when things change—and they change abruptly—it sometimes can happen that you say something that you mean all in good will, but it's taken in the wrong way. Today, you really have to be careful of that with players or with any group; but especially in our profession, with the players, because they sometimes can take great offense over things that twenty years ago, they wouldn't have, or even ten years or five years ago with that.

Nobody's trying to be offensive, but it's also a very hard job. My father told me many things; and like most children, I either didn't understand them at the time, or I just didn't see how valuable they were. Once he told me the worst thing about an orchestra player... "The worst thing for us is that we've played these pieces hundreds of times. We know these pieces better than any conductor who can come in and tell us, and yet they're telling us things that just have

no bearing on the piece, and it's like for their own personality." He said, "That is really frustrating to have somebody come in and tell us how to play a Brahms symphony when all they have to do is show us, and we'll do whatever they want. But they come up with some weird ideas."

My father was very vocal and he wasn't a fan of conductors. He admired some, but he said they [Cincinnati Symphony] saw so many that they didn't like. Right in the middle of rehearsal, he asked this guy, "Maestro, excuse me. I have a question. Do you want us to play this piece the way it goes, or do you want us to play this piece the way you're conducting it?" [laughter] Which is a terrible thing to say, but I tell the story not because I'm proud of my father, but because that says in a nutshell what they're often thinking.

Another thing... Can I tell another story?

Ian Passmore:

Of course, please.

David Effron:

This is a story about what you have done and will do further, which is jump in and conduct a performance, like you don't have any rehearsal and you just have to take over. I did that a lot, which was the best education I could have. It just happened that way. At first, before I had my own shows, I'd conduct the last two or three performances of the whole run. The orchestra in New York was very good. They could do anything, but the idea is to not make too many changes. Changes you have to make because of the singers, perhaps, but not some gigantic difference in the way you beat from the last conductor, the guy who was the chief conductor.

I had a disaster once, only once though. That was in [*Die Fledermaus*] where this passage comes back in the second act a few times. There are many ways you can do it, and everybody has different ways. So, I was taking over, and I decided, "oh no, that isn't right. They're all wrong. I've got a better way to do it." I didn't tell anybody because the orchestra knew me by then. They wanted to do well, so I didn't think there was an issue. I got into the pit, and I conducted it the way that I wanted it to be played. Well, it caught them by surprise. Some played it my way, and others played it the way they were used to playing it. It's not that I was unclear, it just took them completely by surprise. Nobody did

it that way. For a moment, it kind of fell apart a little bit and I got some strange looks.

I called my father and I told him the situation, what had happened. He called me an idiot. He said, “you can’t do that to an orchestra in a place where you have possibilities of doing different things.” He said, “second of all, I don’t like your idea, but that’s neither here nor there.” He said, “you just can’t do that to an orchestra in such a problematic place. They’re used to a certain way. What are you trying to prove? Just do it the way the last guy did it in that situation. When you’re the maestro, you can do that, but now you’re...”

Ian Passmore: When you’ve prepared it yourself.

David Effron: Yeah. That was a great lesson.

Ian Passmore: Don’t be a hero.

David Effron: Yeah, don’t be a hero. Anyway, I don’t know if you’re going to use any of these stories.

Ian Passmore: Yes, I am. This is an especially useful one.

David Effron: I’m good at that part—the stories. *[laughter]*

Ian Passmore: That’s a good lesson for people to know, though.

David Effron: It’s an example, yeah. I’ll tell you another story that’s kind of attached to this. When I used to conduct there, I would come in, and the orchestra would go crazy before I even gave a note. They’d stamp their feet. “Hi, Dave. How are you doing?” This is the way they talked to me in New York. I came in once and the bassoon player took his hand to shake my hand, and he had on one of those huge, fake bear paws. Why they did that, I don’t know, but they felt comfortable with me. They liked me, and in a way, they thought I was their own, one of them. They were glad that somebody like me got a chance. There are still some of them, when I see them, I still know them.

One day, I had conducted [*Tales of*] *Hoffmann* somewhere, and I went back to New York for the season, and my boss called me in and he said, “look, the guy who’s supposed to conduct *Hoffmann*,

I'm not happy with him. You have to take over." I always thought it was funny he would say, "oh, you *have* to do this," and I would say, "oh my God, what a big deal." He said, "you get all the rehearsals now." I did. I had all the rehearsals. I got to practice, rehearse this part, and "don't play so loud," and "I need more this" or something... Whatever you do in a rehearsal, I did it.

Then came the performance, and I had a really good cast. I knew it was going to be pretty good. I walked into the pit as usual. "Maestro to the pit," and I go in, and there's dead silence. I was waiting for all of this buddy-buddy stuff. There was some talk, but they didn't even look at me. They're looking like this [*blank stare*]. Not a word. You could have heard a pin drop. I used that "could have heard a pin drop" because after the performance, they're putting away their instruments. I'm walking out, and they didn't say, "great job, Dave," or anything. I mean, they didn't say, "you suck," or anything like that either. It was just silence.

I called my father. I was really upset. I said, "I don't understand this, because I did okay, and it was a really good performance. We had good singers so far." He said, "hear the pin." I said, "what do you mean, 'hear the pin?'" What? I'm telling you something that bothered me and you're saying, 'hear the pin.' What the f\*ck does that mean?" He said, "you could have heard a pin drop, right?" I said, "yeah, that's true." He said, "now I'm going to tell you why." He said, "because the day you took over, you had your first rehearsal, you're no longer Dave. You're the maestro. They're going to act differently to you, just like that." And they did. I didn't know why. It wasn't that they viewed me any differently. They didn't really, except my position was different.

Ian Passmore: It changed the dynamic.

David Effron: It changed it like... Nothing could be so obvious. That's a good example of how things change. My father knew all of these things automatically. I'm so glad he explained it—not at the time, but I am now. How much I learned from little things like that that are so important. Nobody teaches that kind of thing. That's one reason I tell the stories. I like the stories, but I also think that people remember my stories. They may not remember my teaching, but they remember my stories. That's really good, because some day they'll be in that position, and then it will come back to them.

Ian Passmore: Well, it just gives a concrete example of many of the things that we talked about already, that we say can't really be taught in a classroom. They can only be experienced.

David Effron: Yes, and they can be referred to.

Ian Passmore: But they can't really be taught in a sort of academic, classroom kind of way.

## Chapter 7: On the Teaching of Conducting

Ian Passmore: What is your personal philosophy when it comes to the teaching of conducting? What is a conducting teacher's primary responsibility?

David Effron: The primary responsibility of the teacher is to be honest with the student, and that also involves making a judgment call when something is obvious. You can't ever predict. It's like singers. I've thought some singers would never do anything and they turned out to be superstars, and vice versa. I talked about one of them that I know a couple days ago with somebody. She started out fine and now, I was told, she had to declare bankruptcy. She's doing nothing, and that's not in my opinion, equal. That's not fair, because it shouldn't be that way.

I try to be very realistic with my students. I don't think I would ever tell anybody they shouldn't do conducting. I think that in order to do it you have to want it more than you are talented sometimes, because I have found that the people who want it badly enough and dream of being a conductor are usually the ones who make it. Those who feel 93% this, that isn't good enough—you have to feel 103%. In the end, if I feel a student doesn't want to hear anything, I tend to back off. In my earlier years, I didn't back off. I try to be honest with people that it's a rough business.

What makes me most happy is when I can help somebody, and they achieve a position. That's what's important to me in conducting. You can teach anybody how to wave their arms in a certain direction; that doesn't really have much to do with conducting. So, when one grows as a musician and as a communicator, and I'm somewhat responsible for that person; that makes me very happy, when they're able to achieve a certain level. Even to the point like, "talk a little louder and don't mumble on the podium;" things like that actually make a real difference.

Ian Passmore: I know of a relatively well-known conducting teacher and I'm close with a lot of his students. I asked once what's his philosophy when it comes to teaching conducting and it really threw me off. His approach was much like military boot camp. This is graduate level conducting, mind you. He tears each student down to

nothing, so he can rebuild them from the ground up. He insists they stand like him, hold the baton like him...that sort of thing. How does that differ from your own approach?

David Effron: I think I know... It can only be one of two people that I'm thinking of, but that's neither here nor there. That was the method of teaching music when I was a student. You beat the person down as far as you can, and when he's lying on the ground you kick him. And then if he can survive that, you support him, build him up again; but if he ever gets out of line, you start from the beginning again. That was the way of teaching. I once asked a very, very excellent musician who was a friend of mine, why he thought that we all practiced so much when we were kids, and now some people practice a lot and others don't. But we all practiced it, and the reason we did, his answer was, "fear is a great motivator."

That was the reason. That's why we practiced. When I thought about it, I realized he was correct, because if we'd ever go into a lesson unprepared, you really had to pay for it. I know a pianist who went into lessons. If the teacher didn't think they were prepared, they would hit their hand with a ruler.

Ian Passmore: Oh, it's like a Catholic school or something.

David Effron: Like a Catholic school, yeah. At any rate, my philosophy is that there has to be a certain commitment by showing me that you're interested in doing what I suggest, and if you're not interested, you do it anyhow because you have to try it. Maybe it doesn't work for you—that's possible. So, I'm flexible in that way, because each conductor is different. But there are a few basic things about conducting that I believe in wholeheartedly, and I try to instill those. I don't believe in brutality even though that's all I knew as a young musician. We all knew that, and still today there are some instrumental teachers that are just brutal. Sometimes when you're extremely gifted, it comes easily to you; then you see somebody who can't do something that is very easy for you, and you just don't get it. You don't understand why they can't do it, so you get angry. As long as somebody is trying, or I view them as trying, I'll help anybody. I don't have an issue with that.

I do have a certain philosophy, and therefore people who come to me, usually in the first year, have trouble adjusting if this is foreign



to them. But if they work hard, they can really make changes. I think that's probably what people know about me. I'm about helping people make changes and become conductors, and in the end you're your own conductor. You shouldn't look like your teacher, particularly, and you certainly shouldn't look like me. And you shouldn't always take everything the conductor says as gospel, because it's not, even though it may be for that teacher, but it's not for that particular student. I'm really against saying, "this is the way I do it, so you better do it that way too."

If somebody wants to conduct seven like: "one, two, three, four, five, six, se-ven" [*demonstrates unconventional conducting pattern*], I'm going to be the first one to say, "wait a minute. I know you want to start a new movement here, but this isn't going to work. You've got to do it more traditional."<sup>44</sup> But you can conduct seven: "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven;" or "one, two, three, four, five, six, seven" [*demonstrates two, more conventional (and frankly, correct) ways of beating a 7-pattern*]. I'm not going to say you have to do it a certain way, because I do it that way. That's not the right answer. You have to do it a certain way because for you that works the best, and the communication is the best for your players. That's all. I said I have a good ear; I have a good eye, too, so I'm able to see that.

Ian Passmore: It's fairly obvious from your answer that you don't typically take the dogmatic approach.

David Effron: Not particularly.

Ian Passmore: But you did mention that there are some foundational things you believe in, things that every conductor needs to have. What are those things?

David Effron: There's one in particular: the shape of your beat. The shape of your beat should look the way you want the music to sound. We used to play this game in school that somebody conducts a work—no music, just the motions—and within a short time, the other guys should be able to tell you what piece it is solely by the way it looks. I rarely see a student whose motions look like the music's

---

<sup>44</sup> Maestro Effron is making a joke here. The "7-pattern" that he is beating is really a subdivided measure of 4/4, in which his "se-ven" is really beats seven and eight.

supposed to sound, even if they have decent technique. In other words, they can go in different directions, but I haven't any idea what they would want from me as a player because it's all generic. I said a number of times in these interviews that that's not really conducting. I do my damndest to try to instill in young conductors how important it is, in communication, to be able to show the music in every beat.

Every beat has its purpose, and that has been the hardest thing for me to live with, because I'm not completely successful. Frankly, I don't think everybody even understands what I'm talking about. That tells me that the basic training isn't very good if they didn't even cover that or talk about it. You also have to train your ears. If you don't have good ears, you cannot make a career as a conductor because you won't be able to correct things. I don't know how to train your ears because I never had to. One of my former students wrote his dissertation on training your ears, and all in good fun I made fun of him, but it's in the library here if you want to see it. I don't know what it's called. I can call him and find out. He claims that there is a system that he used. I would be totally unhelpful in that because I don't know how to do it. To me, you either hear, or you don't.

Ian Passmore: For you, it came naturally.

David Effron: Yeah, and I'm not the only one; there are a lot of guys. But not being able to hear... How many times in our classes did I tell people, "correct this note?" And it's so blatant that a deaf person could figure it out, but they didn't know. In fact, I had one student who went to another teacher and the teacher called me and said, "I'm very impressed with this student. Very good conductor. Should I take him?" I said, "oh yeah, he's a really hard worker, etc." He called me back two days later and said, "I gave him an ear test. This guy couldn't hear anything." Well, I knew that; I just didn't tell my colleague. So, he didn't take him, and I think he was right not to take him. When I took him, I didn't know. At any rate, there's that... Then, I think it's so important to learn about the psychology between the players and the conductor.

I tell a story about a player and a conductor, or sometimes I explain the options one has in confronting certain situations with players, like we've talked about here. I don't think that's taught, but it's a

very important part of conducting. Because some people get jobs from getting along with people, not by conducting. I really detest somebody who says, “you have to conduct exactly like me,” because that’s impossible. Everybody’s built differently, everybody thinks differently. If you’re standing on your head and the teacher says, “no, you’ve got to conduct like me: stand on your feet,” that’s one thing. But, if you’re saying physically, you have to do something that’s...

Ian Passmore: ...even to the extent I mentioned earlier, “hold the baton exactly the way I do...”

David Effron: I hardly talk about holding the baton, because as long as it works... Now, I’ve had some students that hold the baton like this [*demonstrates overly tight grip*], but they can’t flow because it’s sort of like this [*demonstrates jerky conducting pattern*]. Well, then you have to find a way, and one of the ways may be to try to hold your baton differently. I don’t think I would ever dictate how to hold it. I would say, “go home and experiment,” so the goal is to be able to conduct lyrical and round.

Ian Passmore: Make your body work for you.

David Effron: That’s exactly what it is.

Ian Passmore: As we discussed earlier, for someone that may be naturally good at something; for instance, hearing... It might be a little more difficult for such a person to teach that same skill. By extension, does a good conductor necessarily make a good conducting teacher?

David Effron: I think we all know the answer. You can say the same about instrumentalists. There are some really good superstar players, and there are superstar conductors who aren’t good teachers. Again, the reason probably is simply because it’s so natural for them, they have trouble articulating or even understanding how you do something. They just do it. There are people like that. When I was a student here, I used to play for lessons for a very famous tenor, American tenor. I had heard him sing a lot when I was a kid. His

name was Charles Kullman, who you probably don't know, but you should look him up.<sup>45</sup> He was amazing.

He sang beautifully and heartrending; brought out all emotions. It was wonderful. So, I had this opportunity to play for his lessons, and I remember one particular day where he had a very good singer. At that time, there were older singers in the opera here. The guy's thirty-five, forty years old. They were getting doctorates or maybe they came in off the GI bill; I don't know.<sup>46</sup> Anyway, he had a very good singer and he was trying to explain to him how to produce a sound, and he was almost inarticulate. He couldn't find the words to say, and here I am thinking, "well, that's ridiculous. The guy has the most beautiful sound and powerful. I don't understand it." Finally, after about five to ten minutes, Kullman got so frustrated. He said, "it's so easy; it's just like this," and he sang this glorious high note. He must have been seventy years old by then. He sang this glorious high note, and the windows were shaking.

He couldn't explain it, but this student needed an explanation about the palette and where you place the sound. He needed that, and the teacher wasn't able to give it to him. He just would say, "this is the way you do it." Those people are not very good teachers because they're unable to articulate exactly what they want, and teachers need to be able to do that. And then some people who are not particularly good performers are amazingly good teachers. It happens that way, too. A good performer can learn how to be a good teacher. But to be a good performer, it's an indescribable something. I don't even know the word. There isn't a word for what makes you a good performer, but you know it immediately when you see somebody perform.

Ian Passmore: Some call it that "X-factor." You either have it or you don't.

David Effron: The "X-factor," yes. I believe in that. I've seen it. Have you?

---

<sup>45</sup> Charles Kullman (1903-1983); American tenor who performed at many of the leading opera houses in Europe, as well as New York's Metropolitan Opera; voice faculty, Indiana University, 1956-1971; voice faculty, Curtis Institute of Music, 1970-71.

<sup>46</sup> The Servicemen's Readjustment Bill of 1944 (also known as the GI Bill) provided returning World War II soldiers with a range of benefits aimed at helping them return to normal, American lives. One of these benefits was tuition payments and living expenses for high school, college, and/or trade school.

Ian Passmore: Yeah, I have too. I absolutely believe it's an intangible thing that you just can't put your finger on it. What kinds of changes in mindset or approach have to take place when you're shifting between thinking about yourself as a conductor and shifting gears to, "well, now I'm having to teach somebody else?"

David Effron: I don't think anything changes. In order to teach properly, first of all, you have to put it in your own court and figure out what you do and why, and how it feels. You have to go back to basics for yourself. From there, you have to take into consideration the student's personality and realize the kind of words you use to describe it aren't necessarily the words you would describe for yourself. But you have to understand first. If you believe in something and you understand how you do it and what it feels like, then you can translate it into what that student needs.

My self never gets out of the equation. The simpler you are, the more you can relate a feeling, because a lot of it is feeling. If you can relate a feeling to what you want, the more successful you'll be. I'll give you an example. I had a student last week who was conducting the third movement of the Dvořák Eighth [Symphony], and she was conducting [*demonstrates a generic fast-3/slow-1 pattern, technically appropriate for conducting a symphonic minuet-trio or scherzo movement*]. Sure, everything was in its place, but it was completely wrong. What style was that? I couldn't get her to loosen up, and I just suddenly came upon this thing in my own head. I said, "do you ice skate?" "Oh, not only do I ice skate, but as a kid I was a champion." I said, "okay. The pianist will play this piece and you ice skate to it across the room," which was a perfect feeling of how that piece goes. By God, she then put it into her hands and she was ice skating. She understood, and that did it.

That kind of thing is much easier to understand than saying, "no, your arm has to be limp; your arm has to be loose." That's true; your arm does have to be loose. But a better way to explain it is to put it in the context of something they do in everyday life. That's what I try to do sometimes; a lot, actually.

Ian Passmore: Figuring out what they're already bringing to the table and how you can enhance it or tap into it.

We've talked about your eye for conducting and teaching the physical act of conducting. But, to what extent can you teach the non-physical aspects of conducting, if at all? How do you approach the ideas of programming and the rehearsal process and the psychology? How do you teach those things with student conductors, or can they even be taught?

David Effron: They're very difficult to teach because you have to have examples. We didn't do enough of this in our classes. I know I said it's important, but I didn't really have any exercises to prove it. One way you could do it is by having somebody from the orchestra talk back to the conductor. You do it without the conductor knowing that's going to happen and see how the conductor reacts to it. From there it's easy for me to say, "this was right; this wasn't right, because dah, dah, dah." Those things are really important. We don't spend enough time on it; you're right.

It's also important to learn how to talk to an orchestra, beginning from the point that you have to look everybody in the eye, and you have to enunciate and talk louder than you think you are. That's number one. And what you say...using the least amount of words in the least amount of time, because you don't want to keep going. I know I'm long-winded, but I'm not that way on the podium. It's two different personalities.

Ian Passmore: You told me once that if I couldn't say something in five words or less, to figure out a different way to say it or don't say it at all.

David Effron: You know why? Because they can't keep attention that long, plus the fact you're working against time. You add up seconds, they add up. You might save three, four minutes in a rehearsal. People laugh, "three or four minutes; that's nothing," but it is. You can do a lot in three or four minutes. I had to talk a lot this week about what your physicality is in front of an orchestra, because there was one guy... He was fine, except he didn't get the best playing out of them, because his physicality was so neutral. It wasn't even bad, it just was neutral. And he's a tall guy, so you work with that. You know all this. He doesn't know, but he'll learn, that if you stand a certain way in front of the orchestra, like you're the king because you are the king of the orchestra, you'll get them to play better automatically.

Having said that, I know I don't do that. I start out that way probably for a few minutes, but then I'm all over the place. I'm very proud of my certain brand because I don't know anybody who has the body language like I do.

Ian Passmore: No, I can't think of any. There's also a little bit of what we call the "Maestro mystique." Do you know the term?

David Effron: I do know the term.

Ian Passmore: If you get a well-respected conductor, someone with the real credentials and chops on the podium, it's immediately going to be better because there's a built-in respect that the orchestra is giving to them. I've seen you do reading sessions with an orchestra, or a first rehearsal with an orchestra that you don't know, and there are spots that don't go that well for another conductor even in the performance.

David Effron: I'm able to have that, I know. And again, I don't know how that happens. It's natural.

Ian Passmore: I think it's at least a little bit of that.

David Effron: It's my wanting it to be. It's the will. It's my wanting them to play well.

Ian Passmore: Having so much musical conviction. You and I watched a conductor, a colleague of mine once. I don't know if you remember, but you walked over to me and said, "I don't agree with a single musical thing that's happening, but the thing about it is the musical conviction is so strong that you've got to be able to convince an orchestra that that's the only way that piece can be in that moment."

David Effron: Right. And you will ask me, "how do you learn that?" The only answer I can give that makes any sense is that you learn that by living life, having experiences. That's all I can tell you, and distress or trauma is a terrible thing and it makes you feel bad, but it also helps you grow. I've done some of my best conducting when my wives left me. I know it's funny, but it's the truth, because that was all I had to hold onto. I lost so much, not to mention all my money and children and everything else. But music; it was always there for me. I owe—and everybody who's in

it for a lifetime will tell you the same—one owes music so much, you can never repay it for what it did for you. That's the way I look at it, especially in my waning years here. I can't repay it as much as... You can't repay it. It saved my life.

Ian Passmore: I know you mentioned that the music of Mahler resonates very strongly with you, or that you found...

David Effron: ...a compatriot.

Ian Passmore: ...kindred spirits of a certain kind.

David Effron: I think you're right. I believe that.

Ian Passmore: I would imagine that's why, because he had his own obvious trials and tribulations.

David Effron: He had a lot of demons. I do too, like everybody else, but I don't think as many as he had. That poor guy. They beat him up everywhere he went. But did he stop? No.

Ian Passmore: I think that's why his music resonates so strongly with you. Like Shostakovich, his [Mahler's] life is built into every note.

David Effron: Very true.

Ian Passmore: How much do you believe in teaching the preparation of application materials, or did you ever focus much on that? I know the focus has gone a lot more to that, especially in the age of cover letters and YouTube and that sort of thing.

David Effron: We had very little of that. For formal applications, we didn't have very much. There were certain things like the Fulbright or the Rockefeller Grant. Those things, they were formal applications. First of all, they didn't have that many organizations. If you were going to be an Assistant Conductor of an orchestra, by word of mouth you got the job, or the conductor of the orchestra knew you. I don't remember any auditions. If you had to apply for music directorship, that was different. You didn't fill out a lot of stuff; you were either invited or you weren't invited. I don't remember ever sending tapes or anything to any orchestra where I was a candidate for a job. I don't think that existed.



Nowadays you're right. It's very, very important. Do I spend a lot of time on it? I spend time if somebody asks me to; I don't initiate it. But people do have to know. They often put things in the wrong order of where it should be. The thing that's the most prominent should be on top. I see things like, "I guest conducted the Hartford Symphony." That's good; but right below it you say, "I gave a seminar for the nursery school in Boston," which shouldn't be in there. You know that, but not everybody does know in the beginning. It's like anything else, you've got to be told. People don't know anything. I'm a big sports fan. If you put me in a baseball stadium on a team, I would look like a goofball. I wouldn't know what the protocol is. Nobody ever taught me, which brings me to talking a little about networking, which was not a priority.

Networking for us was you got to know other musicians. You wanted to know them, but not because they were going to give you a job; just because it was a community of likeminded people. Nowadays you've got to network, because that's how you're going to get a job. That's the impression I get. Would anybody be smart in saying, "well, that's not that important. It's really important just to learn how to conduct?" I wish it were different, because in my opinion too much time is spent on that at the expense of really learning how to conduct. But, would I be smart in advising not to network? No. I encourage it because that's your ticket; it's very important.

I don't know about networking; I only know from what I see being done. And my dilemma is I cannot reconcile the fact that people are great networkers, but do they become better conductors? No, because that's really become secondary. In a way—I'm ashamed to say it—but that may be the right philosophy, because sometimes people get jobs because they network. They make careers because they knew how to network. You didn't use that word, but that's what you meant.

Ian Passmore:

A better fundraiser than they are a conductor or an artist.

David Effron:

Right, and it is important, but I don't know. I'm old. People think I relate well to young people and on a certain level, I do; but on another level, it's that way with every single generation. Some of it just goes beyond me. I don't get it. I don't get how you can be a

student and talk to the teacher as if the teacher doesn't know sh\*t. I've seen it. I had it happen to me recently and I was just like, "what?" If I were forty-years-old I would have been devastated, but at my age, as I've said, this is the time where I just avoid that person. I don't have anything to do with it.

Ian Passmore: We live in the generation of networking and the longest CV, and your best 15-second, fancy conducting, YouTube clip—that's the person that becomes famous. I'll just share really quickly.... Someone told me recently that a community member (I'm assuming a Board member of some kind) had said in a search committee meeting, "oh, this conductor must be really good. I know because I saw their CV and they won this big award, so this conductor's really good."

It just happened to be the conductor that a majority of the orchestra had voted against, saying that conductor was "unacceptable." It's this disconnect between...

David Effron: And that's why people who don't know shouldn't be making laws, making rules, making decisions. They shouldn't be in that position, but they are. I read a thing and maybe you read it too. There was this conductor in some North German town; he was an American. He had been the Chief Conductor there for eight years, maybe. He was very nice in social situations, and he appeared to have a love fest with the orchestra, and the whole community loved him. It turned out that he was insulting at the rehearsals; I mean something terrible. They got rid of him, and he sued them. I don't know what the outcome was....

Ian Passmore: What do you look for in a potential conducting student?

David Effron: One thing I look for is ambition. Positive ambition to give me the feeling that this means everything in the world to him, because I know he won't make a career unless he feels that way. Somebody who can take criticism, because it's a position of criticism. Players are criticizing you, students are criticizing you, everybody's criticizing you; so, you've got to be strong and be able to hold up under that kind of thing. Somebody who has a certain natural talent—that's important to me—and also a certain type of personality.

I always wanted you to come out of your shell and you came out. I don't think because I told you to, but you grew up and you had other experiences, and you remembered somewhere in the back of your brain that someone had said, "you've got to come out of your shell, because you can't be a conductor without that."

Your good thing is that you give the impression, now, that you care about everybody. Of course you care about the music, but you also care about the situation. That's going to pay dividends for you. Before, it's not that you didn't give that; you just were neutral. You looked neutral and you appeared neutral, and that isn't good enough. And those are the things I look for. And especially with singers...I've been wrong a couple times. Not a lot, but five to ten times maybe in my life. It's easier somehow with conductors. Those are the things I look for.

Ian Passmore: Following that same vein, what would be the ideal audition process for a potential conducting student?

David Effron: What we [Indiana University] do as far as conducting... First of all, it would be part of the process; we don't give people enough time. You can't settle into it on a twenty-minute audition; you can barely settle into it, and it's just not enough time. Secondly, it should consist of theoretical things, which we don't do so much. It should also be a test of your hearing. What you can hear? That's so important. I know you have to take some written tests and things like that, but there should be more of that pertaining directly to conducting. You didn't ask me what we did here, but I'm guilty of that. I could have changed that.

Make the podium time more. And our interviews are stupid because we don't ask the right questions. I didn't realize that until later, so the end result is that sometimes we don't have a comprehensive view of the person. We think we do, but we don't. That's what I would do in an audition process. And I would have people here, around the conducting teacher, for the whole week. I'd make it a whole week-long thing.

Ian Passmore: Because it's someone that you're going to be spending a lot of one-on-one time with; it's such a specialized field.

David Effron: Right, and you don't want to make a mistake for you, but more importantly you don't want to make the mistake for them. You're supposed to be the expert.

Ian Passmore: I know you and I have talked about this before, and I've talked about it with other people. I always found the strangest disconnect in theoretical training is that the one thing that all performing musicians have to be able to do the most, which is error detection, is the one thing that never gets taught in any sort of aural training.

David Effron: That's one of my big gripes.

Ian Passmore: You also need to be able to see how someone would potentially rehearse an orchestra, because that's the way they're going to behave in front of people.

David Effron: And that's more important than a performance, how to do that. We don't do enough. Here, we don't do enough of that. When you only have twenty minutes, or I don't remember how long...

Ian Passmore: It's something like that.

David Effron: And it's not fair to the observer, and it's not fair to the student. I know how long it takes to get involved in it. Plus, you're nervous to begin with. So, I would do it differently.

Ian Passmore: You've told a large number of your conducting students over the years, myself included, to "fill the space." Would you talk a little bit about...

David Effron: I did last week, in fact.

Ian Passmore: ...talk a little bit about what this idea of "filling the space" is.

David Effron: Say it's a slow tempo and you're going from the third beat to the fourth beat in a four-beat measure. The sound never stops; it's doing something. The measure has smaller increments within it, always moving toward a certain point. So, if you go from three to four without going through those points, you're not showing everything you want from the music. Also, if you're doing a *legato* passage, you cannot get a *legato* by doing this [*demonstrates abrupt, jerky conducting gesture*]. It's always this [*demonstrates fluid, legato conducting gesture*]. People don't use the whole beat

to enhance the music—they don't. And it also affects rhythm. If you're going one, two, three, four, one [*conducting*]. There are three or four different things that are against conducting like this, but especially if something is *legato*. There's only one way to show *legato* as far as I'm concerned: consistent movement at the same tempo. It especially doesn't work with people going from three to four. They almost all invariably do this [*demonstrates abrupt, jerky conducting gesture*], and I see the improvement when people actually do that [*demonstrates fluid, legato conducting gesture*].

What that does is it makes the sound much smoother, like cotton. If you do this [*conducts with rushed fourth beat*], there's always a slight change of sound on that fourth beat, because you didn't show the whole fourth beat. It's that simple—it is simple.<sup>47</sup>

Ian Passmore: Is this idea of filling the space and flowing evenly through time something that you found in your own conducting and applied it to teaching?

David Effron: Some of the major things that I do in my conducting, I found by watching really good opera conductors. That particular one I learned from a great, underrated Italian conductor [Franco Patané] who was at [New York] City Opera and did the Italian repertoire, and I watched him every night. Especially because he left, and I would do the last two or three performances; I had to look and see what he was doing, so I'd do the same thing. He had the most beautiful, expressive beat, and that's what he did; he filled the space. You don't see everybody doing that.

Ian Passmore: No, you don't. Are there any particularly good composers or specific pieces that you've found to be good for the development of student conductors?

David Effron: I'd say a healthy diet of rhythmic things and lyrical things; things that demand small beats [*demonstrates small, "dry" beat, without rebound*], like that—*staccato*; and other things that have long lines to them. Those are the two basic things—two basic motions—and

---

<sup>47</sup> Essentially, "filling the space" is another way of describing the even flow of the baton through time. Whether beating strict patterns or abandoning the pattern for more expressive purposes, "filling the space" requires that the baton moves both freely and evenly from one beat to the next.

then there's thousands of variations that we use. Any piece that aptly demonstrates those things is very good for conducting. Things that don't have too many difficulties with cuing or anything like that, because you're focusing just on these two elements. Like the beginning of *Leonore* [Overture] *No. 3*; do it in three, not six [for an exercise in broad, lyrical beating (i.e. "filling the space")]. Or *Marriage of Figaro* Overture, or something like that for the other thing [for an exercise in dry, precise, small beats]. Those are the two main things.

Ian Passmore: Would you say that it's important for student conductors (especially nowadays) to get comfortable conducting everything under the sun, from Haydn to pops?

David Effron: As one levels upward, yes. As a general statement, yes. But not people who are more or less beginners, or just elementary. I think you have to get those basic things down first. Then, I really—and I always have done this—I recommend conducting anything that you're offered to conduct. Never turn anything down. Don't say, "well, I only do symphony," or, "I only do opera that was written between 3:00 and 4:00 AM," or something like that. That leaves you down to Rossini [*laughter*]. For a practical reason... The practical reason simply being the more types of literature you can conduct, the better chance you have of working: that's one. The other thing is that each one helps the other. The Broadway stuff, it helps rhythm and it helps looseness, and it helps you to follow because of Broadway singers. The people who do those shows, they do it on their own. They don't follow the conductor; they create it themselves. I had dinner with Brian Eads [former student at Indiana University], and he's on the road ...

Ian Passmore: For *Les Misérables*.

David Effron: Yeah. I went to see the show, and we had dinner and he was talking about that. Because he knows that music, but he never did it. He's classically trained, and he has such a knack for it because he is classically trained. Everybody thinks he's the greatest conductor in the world, and he's having such a success. "But," he said, "I had to learn some things, like I'm telling the singer 'go with me,' but I have to go with them because that's what they do," and a couple other things. Doing a show every single night for a year—well, not every night—but eight shows a week for a year?

Ian Passmore: Of the same show.

David Effron: Yeah. He has the capacity to find things new in it every time. He's that kind of personality. So his shows—or what I saw, at least—were very much alive. And they love him in that company. So, I'm really happy for him; he found his niche. In my day, in my time, if we took a job like that, they would have said we were a big failure; have to work in Broadway. Have to work shows now. I don't see it that way at all.

Ian Passmore: That's like we were talking about getting pigeonholed as a certain type of conductor. Maybe that happens, to a certain extent, less now, because today's conductor has to be able to conduct it all.

David Effron: They should.

Ian Passmore: Because even one orchestra season you might be doing a pops show, a masterworks, an opera in concert, or a movie.

David Effron: Sure. And you have to also learn how to talk to the public. That has to be trained because it didn't come about until fifteen years ago, ten years ago... So yeah, it's important.

## Chapter 8: Conclusion

Ian Passmore: Let's move on to some general advice and closing questions, which touch on and wrap up some of the things we've been talking about in our previous sessions.

How do you go about building a successful university orchestra and conducting program? What are the building blocks?

David Effron: The first word that comes to mind is "continuity." In order to do either of those things—well, both of those things—you have to be on-site. It's a seven-day-a-week adventure, and it's not like you can do two days and then let it go for a week. You have to be with the people consistently. You have to stress the things that are so important for an orchestra to learn. We've talked about those for two days now; and as far as the teaching end of it, you can see development easier, because you're dealing one on one. You need to be consistent in stressing the things that the student lacks, and I need to be true to my philosophy about what a conductor is, all the time, without any kind of compromise. Then, you'll see some results.

Obviously—I don't know, maybe it's not obvious—the conducting student needs an orchestra. You cannot teach conducting in front of a mirror, nor can you teach it with a piano. The student cannot respond the same way, because in front of an orchestra, it's such a different feeling than from any other possibility, that you're not having the opportunity to develop what you really need to develop. It all happens in front of the orchestra. A good conducting program offers as much time as possible in front of an orchestra.

To build an orchestra, let's assume you have any student for four years' time. They should be put into orchestras that are geared towards the third-year student, the second-year student, etc.; except in the instances where which often happens, people that have played in very good youth orchestras for five years or something like this, and they could start at a higher level—maybe in the junior orchestra or the senior orchestra, even, when they come in. This is all done by auditioning and talking with the people, just gaining knowledge about their experience.



The best programs for orchestra building have to do somewhat with competition: player against player. Those in which there are certain times during the year, maybe twice each semester, where the player has an opportunity to move up in the section based upon their improvement, which is judged by the main conductor and the committee of (probably) string players, because if you don't include them, they won't be happy.

The main thing that is important is consistency. For example, through no fault of their own, at Indiana University, there is not enough time with one conductor, because the system doesn't allow it: you can't do that. But, where I was before I came to Indiana, at Eastman [School of Music], I was the only [orchestra] conductor. It was rare that we had anybody else conduct an orchestra, and the amount of improvement over a year's time and four years' time, for individuals, was really good. Just because one guy [*referring to himself*] was up there on the podium most of the time, and it was well known what my philosophy was, and it was well known what I would tolerate and what I wouldn't. By the end of the first year, they all knew. So, the third- and fourth-year students that were basically in one of the two orchestras, they really played. Some of the stuff they played... They were really wonderful, and that couldn't have taken place unless the system allowed it. That's how you approach an orchestra.

At IU there were many fine players, especially in my first years here. The talent level overall was higher here in the string department at IU, but the rate of improvement was less, because they had so many conductors in front of the one orchestra, and students have to adjust to each conductor. That already takes a couple weeks, I'd say. I spoke with the administration and suggested that they spend as much time as possible with one conductor, with each orchestra, and they did that as much as they could: they do that now. When I was there, they liked to have one orchestra have a conductor for half a semester instead of one concert. That's very good, and those are the things that I think are important.

Ian Passmore:

Do you find your approach, your personal approach with student orchestras and student conductors, to be decidedly different than that of other teachers?

David Effron: I'm not the one to judge that. You mean the approach being different?

Ian Passmore: Yes.

David Effron: Every conductor has his or her own approach. I guess I can say yeah, my approach is different from some people, and I have in common certain aspects of my approach with some other teachers, and then I have nothing in common with some other teachers. It's the whole gamut. That's not to imply that the other teachers don't have anything to offer. That's not what I mean.

Ian Passmore: It's just different.

David Effron: It's the approach, it's the philosophy. I think it could be somewhat measured by the success of the students afterwards. If a large number of students are able to get jobs, which is the main goal, then I guess the teacher, whoever that might be, has done something right. On the contrary, if no students are being placed, then part of that, at least, has to be laid at the doorstep of the teacher.

One more thing about teaching. In conducting—it's true of any instrument—you don't teach every student the same way. If you have twelve students, you teach the basic foundation similarly with every student, but then the variations of the theme should be very different because you're dealing with different people and different bodies and different talents. I openly say that my philosophy is to teach each student on the basis of my perception of what is best for them. I would hope everybody does that. That's an important element. It's not like you told me before, where there was somebody that was teaching, and you had to do it that person's way in every aspect. That isn't good teaching in my opinion.

Ian Passmore: Could you give us an insider's prospective on a professional versus an academic search committee? How does that process work and how does a young instrumentalist, singer, or conductor stay "alive" through that process?

David Effron: You stay alive by A) realizing that, to a certain extent, it's a crap shoot. These are professional auditions. Everybody has their own tastes and maybe a member of the committee...maybe five of them think you're the greatest thing ever and two of them just don't like

the way you play. That's very possible. It's very rare that all seven would say the same thing, either positive or negative. In that sense, it's a matter of taste. But on the other hand, I would say that—certainly in an academic situation—the process is very fair, unless your own teacher is sitting on the committee. If I had conducting students applying for the position and I was one of the judges, I probably would excuse myself from their audition because I can't be objective. I'd like to be objective, but nobody can be 100% objective.

Basically, the process in an academic institution is fair. The professional situation...it can be fair, but it isn't always fair because ultimately you have to consult your whole section. If you're the concertmaster or principal second violin and you're on the committee, you have to consult all the other people—eventually, all the other twelve second violins—and some people have hidden agendas: their former roommate is auditioning, their best friend, their wife or husband at home told them, “you better get my friend a job here.” Those things happen all the time, just all the time. Sometimes, as a result, the best players are not the winners.

I always felt that if you have the goods and you want it badly enough, you're going to get something, so you can't go home and mope about this. The process is questionable to begin with and I know people who have lost a number of auditions. I only know one person—I'm sure there are more—but I only know one person who came directly out of school and got the first audition that they ever took. You're not supposed to get the first audition. You're supposed to learn from it so you can do better the next time. But it's so easy to get disillusioned and to get bitter and upset and not quite know what went wrong. Even in the student auditions, they don't necessarily tell you what they didn't like or what you can improve on, and certainly not in the profession. Sometimes you don't know why you (unless it's a blatant mistake you made) were rejected. You can't look at it like that, you just have to go onto the next audition.

It's a necessary process and I think people are doing the best they can. For the most part, it's very honest. And until there's somebody who comes up with a better idea, it is what it is.

Ian Passmore: Since you've auditioned so many performers and conductors over the years, both professionally and in academia, what's your advice to those people, to the auditionees, about putting your best foot forward in terms of a successful audition or interview and things of that nature?

David Effron: Don't try to second-guess anything; don't try to second-guess the decisions. Just don't try to second-guess. I've had in the past, young people come up and play their auditions for a symphony orchestra. They played their audition material—violinists, mostly—and they would say, "well, you know the sound of this orchestra; you know their philosophy. What should I do to get the job? How should I play?" My answer has always been, "wait a minute, you can't second-guess what they want. Even if you're right, you've got to play the way you play and not try to say, 'today, I'm going to play a different way because that symphony has that kind of sound.'"

What happens in those cases? Sometimes you are eliminated, because they feel you're not compatible as a player with the rest of the orchestra—not as a person, but as a player. On the other hand, if you're a really good player, they'll take you. And when you get in the orchestra, within one second, the guy sitting next to you, who's been playing there for twenty years, will poke you and say, "here, we do this; or here, we don't do this." You learn very, very quickly because it's an economic thing. It has to do with your livelihood.

I say, don't second-guess. Just do what you do and remember that in an audition, the following things are the most important: rhythm is the first most important thing. And some knowledge, that you can give indications by the way you play—tempo, color, etc.—that you really know these pieces, the audition pieces, backwards and forwards. Technical things, also; you cannot make a mistake. The smallest glitch will eliminate you automatically.

Some orchestras don't pay much attention to great musicality because they can influence that by who's conducting or how the orchestra plays. But rhythm and technique and an idea about how the piece goes are the three most important things, and the only important things.

I've known guys who were really good. They happened to have not such a great day, which can happen, and they make one little mistake. One little mistake and that was the end of their audition. In a sense, you can say what people are most interested in, in hiring other people, is a robotic style of playing and not a human style of playing. That's my opinion; that's what I think of that.

Ian Passmore: Finally, what general closing advice do you have for someone who might want to pursue a career in music, whether they be an instrumentalist, a singer, or a conductor...just a career in music in general?

David Effron: That's the easiest question to answer, because I say it every chance I get. If you can't live one day without music being the greatest component of your life, then you shouldn't go into the field. Simply because there are a lot of wonderful things that can't be surpassed by any other profession; and there are also some things that aren't so pleasant because it's so competitive, and you have to wade through all of that. The only thing that's going to be your salvation on some days is the fact that the music moves you.

Also, if you're in a really good position, you can make a lot of money; and most other positions, you can almost eke out a living...almost. You never know which direction you're going to go. I'm not saying that money is so important, but each individual talent should be recognized as something that's really important in the world. If it's that important in the world, which I think it is, then you should be compensated at least to the point where you don't have to worry about if you're going to have any money at the end of the year. That kind of stuff, you know?

The discrepancy in payments between first-chair players and the guy who sits at the end is so extreme—sometimes by hundreds and hundreds of thousands of dollars—that people wonder why orchestras are financially in a bind. One of the reasons they're financially in a bind is that the pay scale runs such a gamut between high and low pay, and it's frustrating for the musicians. It's not a fair system. I don't think you have to make \$600,000 when you're a concertmaster. I know that in the old times, when I was a child, most orchestra players had two jobs. They didn't even pay enough to make a living. But we've come very, very far and that's good, and “thank you” to the union for helping musicians to

make a decent living, but there are still plenty who don't make anything. Yet, people are killing each other to get that job because it is so competitive.

Unless you're willing to go through some difficult times, because you love it so much, that's the only rationalization I can think of...and you're good at something else and you like something else. In a lifetime, you want to be comfortable; as you grow older, you want more stability. It's okay to run around like a crazy person when you're in your twenties; but when you're in your fifties, you want a home, you want a family, and you want to be in a position where you're guaranteed those things. The best part is you get to do something that you love to do. People in the workforce...there's not a majority who can say they love to do something, and if you don't love it, I'm not sure it's worth it.

I wouldn't encourage my children to go into music—I wouldn't do that. I would support it if they wanted to do it, but I'll tell you a story about my youngest child who was a terrific actor. He acted in college and in high school, and he wanted to go into it. He's one of these guys that when he came on the stage, every eye in the theater went to him, and he took it very seriously but was very modest about it, and he wanted to go into acting. I don't think it was too good for a father to discourage him, but I had a friend who had a brother, and this brother, you saw him on TV all the time. He either played a bad guy or a detective, and he was on all these shows like *CSI*, *Law & Order*, all that.

I knew he'd had a tough time when he started, so I asked my friend if his brother would talk to my son about being an actor. He did, and he told him, "there's nothing more glorious and I'm a very lucky guy, because at age fifty, I started to make a living as an actor." "What'd you do before that?" "I worked as a waiter—odd jobs. At the end of every single month, I had nothing." Now, he's quite wealthy. My son, who's very thoughtful, took it all in and he decided that there's other things that he likes, that have a more solid foundation and he could still act in an amateur way, and that's what he does. He's a very happy guy. That was totally his decision. I didn't influence him at all.

Also, the times have changed so much that being a musician, the duties you have...Like we spoke about the conductor's need to

socialize, to raise funds, things that weren't on the job description thirty years ago. Those guys, or somebody that gets a university job and makes hardly anything, get nice benefits. But there are people who make \$30,000; a family can't live on that. Obviously classical music, what we do, is not appreciated as much as it was years ago. Notice the lack of people going to concerts. It's also falling out of the education system in secondary schools.

There is even a greater risk today going into it than when I went into it. We didn't have any of these problems. It's a completely different world. The best thing I can say about having a life...it's really important to have a happy life, and you do what you have to do within the confines of the law to have a happy life. If that means there are too many risks in this business, it's okay. Do something to make you happy. I think I answered the question, although I may have answered three questions, none of which had been asked.

Ian Passmore: That's quite alright.

David Effron: Anybody going to sue me for anything I said?

Ian Passmore: There's only one way to find out *[laughter]*. No, I'm just kidding. Maestro, thank you very much.

David Effron: Thank you for making this trip in order to sit and talk with me.

Ian Passmore: I would do it even if we weren't recording.

David Effron: I know you would, and I should say also—this should go on the record. I know this is for a doctoral dissertation, but I want to say that it's been an honor, actually, to have you as a student. I know that you came here specifically to work with me, but in doing so you went way beyond what I thought was possible in the beginning. You have become your own person. Really you always were, but even more so now. You've matured so much; your music-making has matured. You're a real thinking man. You've got a great job now and you'll go on from here. And I count you not only as a successful student, but actually a dear musician friend of mine. And you better put that in your f\*cking dissertation.

Ian Passmore: Oh, it's going in there.

David Effron: But not “f\*cking?”

Ian Passmore: I’m going to put that on my grave stone.

David Effron: It’s true. I’m very, very grateful to have had the chance to work with you.

Ian Passmore: I—and everyone that’s ever studied with you—owe a whole lot to you, so thank you very much.

David Effron: Okay, thanks Ian. We did it!



## Appendix A: Orchestral Repertoire List

### **Adams, John**

*The Chairman Dances*

### **Adler, Samuel**

*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*

*Concerto for Four Saxophones and Orchestra*

*Elegy for Strings*

*Fixed Desire of the Human Heart*

*Flute Concerto*

*Summer Stock*

*Viola Concerto*

### **Amram, David**

*Triple Concerto*

### **Alexander Arutunian**

*Trumpet Concerto*

### **Auber, Daniel**

*Overture to Fra Diavolo*

### **Bach, J. C.**

*Grand Overture No. 1, "Lucio Silla"*

*Sinfonia No. 1 in B major*

*Symphony, Op. 18, No. 3 in D major*

### **Baker, Claude**

*Awakening the Wind*

*Symphony No. 1, "Shadows" (world premiere)*

### **Barber, Samuel**

*Adagio for Strings*

*Andromache's Farewell*

*Die Natali*

*Knoxville: Summer of 1915*

*Medea's Meditation and Dance of Vengeance*

*Overture to The School for Scandal*

*Piano Concerto, Op. 38*

*Violin Concerto, Op. 14*

### **Bartók, Bela**

*Concerto for Orchestra*

*Dance Suite*

*Miraculous Mandarin*

*Music for Strings, Percussion, and Celesta*  
*Orchestra Suite No. 2*  
*Piano Concerto No. 3*  
*Romanian Folk Dances*  
*Viola Concerto*  
*Violin Concertos 1 and 2*

**Beach, Amy**  
*Piano Concerto*

**Beethoven, Ludwig van**  
*Ah, Perfido!*  
*Calm Seas and Prosperous Voyage Overture*  
*Choral Fantasy*  
*Coriolan Overture*  
*Creatures of Prometheus Overture*  
*Egmont Overture*  
*Leonore Overture No. 3*  
*Namensfeier Overture*  
*Piano Concertos 1-5*  
*Romance in G for Violin and Orchestra*  
*The Ruins of Athens Overture and Turkish March*  
*Symphonies Nos. 1-9*  
*Triple Concerto*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Benson, Warren**  
*The Man with the Blue Guitar*

**Berg, Alban**  
*Seven Early Songs*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Berlioz, Hector**  
*Beatrice and Benedict Overture*  
*Benvenuto Cellini Overture*  
*Harold in Italy*  
*Hungarian March*  
*King Lear Overture*  
*Le Corsaire Overture*  
*Roman Carnival Overture*  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
*Symphonie Fantastique*  
*Waverley Overture*

**Bernstein, Leonard**  
*Overture to Candide*  
*Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs*

*Slava!*  
*Symphonic Dances from West Side Story*  
*Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2*  
*Three Dances Episodes from On the Town*  
*West Side Story (complete)*

**Berwald, Franz**  
*Symphonie Singuliere*

**Bizet, Georges**  
*Petite Suite from Jeux d'enfants*  
*Symphony in C*

**Bloch, Ernest**  
*Schelomo*  
*Suite for Viola and Orchestra*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Borodin, Alexander**  
*Polovtsian Dances*

**Bottesini, Giovanni**  
*Double Bass Concerto No. 2 in B minor*

**Bozza, Eugene**  
*Concertino for Tuba and Orchestra*

**Brahms, Johannes**  
*Academic Festival Overture*  
*Double Concerto*  
*Piano Concertos 1 and 2*  
*Symphonies Nos. 1-4*  
*Tragic Overture*  
*Variations on a Theme of Joseph Haydn*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Britten, Benjamin**  
*Four Sea Interludes from Peter Grimes*  
*Les Illuminations*  
*Serenade for Tenor, Horn, and Strings*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Bruch, Max**  
*Kol Nidre for Cello and Orchestra, Op. 47*  
*Scottish Fantasy*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Bruckner, Anton**

*Symphonies Nos. 4 and 7-9*

**Busoni, Ferruccio**

*Violin Concerto*

**Chabrier, Emmanuel**

*Espana*

**Chausson, Ernest**

*Poeme for Violin and Orchestra*

**Chávez, Carlos**

*Toccata for Percussion Instruments*

**Chopin, Frederic**

*Piano Concerto No. 2 in F minor*

**Clingan, Alton**

*Circle of Faith*

**Copland, Aaron**

*Appalachian Spring Suite*

*Billy The Kid Suite*

*Clarinet Concerto*

*Fanfare for the Common Man*

*Lincoln Portrait*

*Old American Songs*

*An Outdoor Overture*

**Corigliano, John**

*Pied Piper Fantasy*

*Voyage*

**Cramer, Johann Baptist**

*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra, Op. 26, No. 2*

**Creston, Paul**

*Concertino for Marimba*

*Dance Overture*

**Debussy, Claude**

*Dances sacrée et profane for Solo Harp and Orchestra*

*La Mer*

*Nocturnes*

*Prelude to The Afternoon of a Faun*

**Delius, Frederick**

*Irmelin Prelude*  
*The Walk to the Paradise Garden*

**Dohnányi, Ernst von**  
*Variations on a Nursery Rhyme for Piano and Orchestra*

**Dukas, Paul**  
*The Sorcerer's Apprentice*

**Dvořák, Antonin**  
*Carnival Overture*  
*Cello Concerto*  
*The Golden Spinning Wheel*  
*In Nature's Realm*  
*Otello Overture*  
*Rondo for Cello and Orchestra*  
*Scherzo Capriccioso*  
*Serenade for Strings*  
*Serenade for Ten Wind Instruments, Cello, and Bass*  
*Silent Woods for Cello and Orchestra*  
*Slavonic Dances, Op. 46*  
*Symphonies Nos. 4 and 6-9*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Elgar, Edward**  
*Cello Concerto*  
*Cockaigne Overture, Op. 40*  
*Enigma Variations*  
*Falstaff*  
*Sea Pictures*

**Erb, Donald**  
*Concerto for Orchestra*

**Ewazen, Eric**  
*Bass Trombone Concerto*

**Falla, Manuel de**  
*Nights in the Gardens of Spain*  
*Three Cornered Hat*

**Fauré, Gabriel**  
*Elegie*  
*Masques and Bergamasques*  
*Pelleas and Melisande*

**Foss, Lukas**  
*Renaissance Concerto for Flute and Orchestra*

**Francaix, Jean**

*The Flower Clock for Oboe and Orchestra*  
*Flute Concerto*

**Franck, Cesar**

*Le chasseur maudit*  
*Poeme symphonique*  
*Redemption*  
*Symphony in D minor*  
*Symphonic Variations for Piano and Orchestra*

**Freund, Don**

*Concerto for Saxophone and Orchestra (world premiere)*  
*Primavera Doubles*  
*Radical Light*

**Genzmer, Harald**

*Concerto for Piano and Orchestra*

**Gershwin, George**

*An American in Paris*  
*Cuban Overture*  
*Piano Concerto in F*  
*Porgy and Bess: A Symphonic Picture*  
*Rhapsody in Blue*  
*Variations on "I Got Rhythm" for Piano and Orchestra*

**Ginastera, Alberto**

*Estancia Ballet Suite*  
*Harp Concerto*

**Gliere, Reinhold**

*Three Dances from "The Red Poppy"*

**Glinka, Mikhail**

*Ruslan and Ludmilla Overture*

**Goldmark, Karl**

*Rustic Wedding Symphony*

**Gould, Morton**

*American Salute*

**Grieg, Edvard**

*Holberg Suite*  
*Peer Gynt Suite No. 1*

*Piano Concerto*

**Griffes, Charles**

*Poem for Flute and Orchestra*

**Grofe, Ferdinand**

*Grand Canyon Suite*

**Handel, George Frideric**

*Royal Fireworks Music*

**Haydn, Joseph**

*The Creation*

*Piano Concerto in D major*

*Symphonies Nos. 4, 6, 8, 45, 75, 82-83, 88, 92, 94, 97, and 100-104*

*Trumpet Concerto in E-flat major*

**Heucke, Stefan**

*Cello Concerto (world premiere)*

**Hindemith, Paul**

*Der Schwanendreher*

*Four Temperaments*

*Mathis der Maler*

*Symphonic Metamorphosis*

**Hodkinson, Sydney**

*Chanson de jadis*

*Clarinet Concerto*

*Symphony No. 6*

**Holst, Gustav**

*The Planets*

**Honegger, Arthur**

*Symphony No. 2*

**Humperdinck, Engelbert**

*Hansel and Gretel Prelude*

**Husa, Karel**

*Celebration Overture*

**Ibert, Jacques**

*Concertino da camera for Saxophone and Orchestra*

**Ives, Charles**

*Symphonies Nos. 1 and 2*

*Variations on “America”*

**Janáček, Leos**

*Lachian Dances*

*Sinfonietta*

*Taras Bulba*

**Kabalevsky, Dmitry**

*Overture to Colas Breugnon*

**Kay, Ulysses**

*New Horizon Overture*

**Khachaturian, Aram**

*Piano Concerto*

*Violin Concerto*

**Kraft, William**

*Timpani Concerto*

**Kodály, Zoltán**

*Galanta Dances*

*Hary Janos*

**Korngold, Erich Wolfgang**

*Violin Concerto*

**Koussevitzky, Serge**

*Double Bass Concerto*

**Lalo, Édouard**

*Cello Concerto*

*Symphonie Espagnol*

**Liszt, Franz**

*A Faust Symphony*

*Les Preludes*

*Mazeppa*

*Piano Concertos 1-3*

*Totentanz*

**Locklair, Dan**

*Hues for Orchestra*

**Lutoslawski, Witold**

*Concerto for Orchestra*

*Dance Prelude for Clarinet, Harp, Strings, and Percussion*

*Livre for Orchestra*



**Mahler, Gustav**

*Symphonies Nos. 1-7, and 9*  
*Lieder eines Fahrenden Gesellen*

**Mendelssohn, Felix**

*Midsummer Night's Dream* (complete)  
*Piano Concerto No. 1*  
*Ruy Blas Overture*  
*Symphonies Nos. 3-5*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Menotti, Gian Carlo**

*Double Bass Concerto*

**Milhaud, Darius**

*Cello Concerto No. 1*

**Mollicone, Henry**

*Celestial Dance*  
*Dansa Trimbula*

**Mozart, W. A.**

*Clarinet Concerto*  
*Concertante for Winds and Orchestra*  
*Concerto for Flute and Harp*  
*Flute Concerto in D major*  
*Flute Concerto in G major*  
*Incidental music for King Thamos*  
*Overtures to Così fan tutte, Magic Flute, Marriage of Figaro, Don Giovanni, Abduction from the Seraglio, and Idomeneo*  
*Piano Concertos K. 453, 466, 467, 482, 491, 503, 595*  
*Serenade No. 7, "Haffner"*  
*Serenade No. 12*  
*Sinfonia concertante in E-flat for Violin and Viola*  
*Symphonies Nos. 1, 18, 26-27, 29-36, 38-41*  
*Various concert arias*  
*Violin Concerto in A major*  
*Violin Concerto in D major*  
*Violin Concerto in G major*

**Mussorgsky, Modest**

*Khovanshchina Prelude*  
*Pictures at an Exhibition*  
*Night on Bald Mountain*

**Muczynski, Robert**

*Concerto for Alto Saxophone and Orchestra*

**Nicolai, Otto**

*Merry Wives of Windsor Overture*

*Il Templario Overture*

**Nielsen, Carl**

*Clarinet Concerto*

*Helios Overture*

*Maskarade Overture*

*Symphonies Nos. 3 and 4*

**Newman, Maria**

*Chorales for Brass and Percussion, Op. 35, No. 3*

*La perte de la terre*

**Nyman, Michael**

*Trombone Concerto*

**O'Conner, Mark**

*Fiddle Concerto No. 2*

**Offenbach, Jacques**

*Orpheus in the Underworld Overture*

**Orff, Carl**

*Carmina Burana*

**Paganini, Niccoló**

*Grand Sonata for Viola and Orchestra*

*Violin Concerto No. 1*

**Pierné, Gabriel**

*Conzertstuck for Harp and Orchestra*

**Piston, Walter**

*Symphony No. 4*

**Popper, David**

*Hungarian Rhapsody for Cello, Op. 68*

**Poulenc, Francis**

*Gloria*

**Prokofiev, Sergei**

*Alexander Nevsky*

*Lieutenant Kije*

*Peter and the Wolf*

*Piano Concertos 1-3*  
*Romeo and Juliet Suite No. 1*  
*Scythian Suite*  
*Sinfonia Concertante*  
*Suite from The Love for Three Oranges*  
*Symphonies Nos. 1 and 5-7*  
*Violin Concertos 1 and 2*

**Proto, Frank**

*Casey at the Bat*

**Rachmaninoff, Sergei**

*Piano Concertos 1-4*  
*Rhapsody on a Theme of Paganini*  
*Symphonic Dances*  
*Symphonies Nos. 2 and 3*

**Ravel, Maurice**

*Alborada del gracioso*  
*Boléro*  
*Daphnis and Chloe Suite No. 2*  
*Don Quichotte*  
*La valse*  
*Le tombeau de Couperin*  
*Ma mère l'Oye*  
*Rhapsody espagnole*  
*Pavane pour une infante défunte*  
*Piano Concerto in G major*  
*Shéhérazade*  
*Tzigane*  
*Valses nobles et sentimentales*

**Respighi, Ottorino**

*Fountains of Rome*  
*Pines of Rome*

**Revueltas, Silvestre**

*Sensemaya*

**Reynolds, Verne**

*Ventures*

**Reznicek, Emil von**

*Donna Diana Overture*

**Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai**

*Capriccio Espagnol*  
*Russian Easter Overture*

*Sadko—Tableau Musical, Op. 5*  
*Sheherazade*

**Rózsa, Miklós**  
*Viola Concerto*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Rodrigo, Joaquin**  
*Concierto de Aranjuez*

**Rossini, Gioachino**  
*Barber of Seville Overture*  
*La gazza ladra Overture*  
*La scala di seta Overture*  
*Siege of Corinth Overture*  
*Semiramide Overture*  
*William Tell Overture*

**Rouse, Christopher**  
*Flute Concerto*  
*Infernal Machine*

**Saint-Saëns, Camille**  
*Carnival of the Animals*  
*Cello Concerto in A minor*  
*Christmas Oratorio, Op. 12*  
*Danse macabre*  
*Havanaise*  
*Introduction and Rondo Capriccioso*  
*Phaeton*  
*Piano Concertos Nos. 2 and 5*  
*Symphony No. 3*  
*Violin Concerto No. 3, Op. 61*

**Sarasate, Pablo de**  
*Zigeunerweisen*

**Schafer, Raymond Murray**  
*Adieu Robert Schumann*

**Schickele, Peter**  
*Concerto for Oboe, Violin, and Orchestra (world premiere)*

**Schoenberg, Arnold**  
*Five Pieces for Orchestra, Op. 16*  
*Chamber Symphony No. 2*

**Schubert, Franz***Symphonies Nos. 1-9**Rosamunde Overture**Incidental Music from Rosamunde***Schuman, William***American Festival Overture**Judith**New England Triptych***Schumann, Robert***Cello Concerto**Konzertstück for Four Horns**Overture, Scherzo, and Finale**Piano Concerto**Symphonies Nos. 1-4**Violin Concerto***Schwantner, Joseph***Aftertones of Infinity* (world premiere)*A Sudden Rainbow**New Morning for the World* (world premiere)*Percussion Concerto***Scriabin, Alexander***The Divine Poem**Symphony No. 3***Shostakovich, Dmitri***Festive Overture**Incidental Music from Hamlet, Op. 32**Piano Concerto, Op. 35**Symphonies Nos. 1, 5-12, and 15**Violin Concerto No. 1***Sibelius, Jean***Finlandia**Symphonies Nos. 1-3, 5, and 7**Swan of Tuonela**Tapiola**Violin Concerto***Smetana, Bedrich***Bartered Bride Overture and Dances**Ma vlast* (complete)**Spohr, Louis***Concertante No. 2 in B minor for Two Violins and Orchestra*

*Quartet Concerto*

**Still, William Grant**

*Afro-American Symphony*

**Strauss, Richard**

*Also Sprach Zarathustra*

*An Alpine Symphony*

*Burlesque*

*Der Rosenkavalier Suite*

*Don Juan*

*Don Quixote*

*Duo Concertino for Clarinet, Bassoon, String Orchestra, and Harp*

*Ein Heldenleben*

*Four Last Songs*

*Horn Concerto*

*Le bourgeois gentilhomme*

*Oboe Concerto*

*Till Eulenspiegel*

*Tod und Verklärung*

**Stravinsky, Igor**

*Concertino*

*Danse Concertante*

*Dumbarton Oaks*

*Eight Miniatures*

*Firebird Suite (1919)*

*Histoire du soldat*

*Jeu des cartes*

*Le baiser de la fée: Divertimento*

*Movements for Piano*

*Petrouchka (1947)*

*Pulcinella Suite*

*Ragtime for Eleven Instruments*

*The Rite of Spring*

*Symphonies of Wind Instruments (1947)*

*Symphony in Three Movements*

*Symphony in C*

**Szymanowski, Karol**

*Violin Concerto, Op. 35*

**Takemitsu, Toru**

*From me flows what you call time*

**Tavener, John**

*Towards the son*

**Thomas, Ambroise**  
*Overture to Raymond*

**Tomasi, Henri**  
*Saxophone Concerto*

**Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich**  
*1812 Overture*  
*Capriccio Italien*  
*Piano Concerto No. 1 in B minor*  
*Rococo Variations*  
*Romeo and Juliet Overture-Fantasy*  
*Serenade for Strings*  
*Sleeping Beauty Suite*  
*Suite No. 4 for Orchestra, "Mozartiana"*  
*Swan Lake Suite, Op. 20a*  
*Symphonies Nos. 1-6*  
*Valse Scherzo for Viola and Orchestra*  
*Violin Concerto*

**Vaughan Williams, Ralph**  
*Fantasy on a Theme of Thomas Tallis*  
*Symphonies Nos. 2 and 7*

**Verdi, Giuseppe**  
*Requiem*

**Villa-Lobos, Hector**  
*Fantasia for Saxophone and Orchestra*

**Wagner, Richard**  
*Bacchanal from Tannhäuser*  
*Flying Dutchman Overture*  
*Lohengrin Preludes to Acts I and II*  
*Meistersinger Prelude*  
*Overture to Rienzi*  
*Prelude & Love Death from Tristan and Isolde*  
*Siegfried Idyll*  
*Siegfried's Rhine Journey*  
*Tannhäuser Overture and Venusberg Music*  
*Wesendonck Lieder*

**Walker, George**  
*Eastman Overture* (world premiere)

**Walton, William**  
*Viola Concerto*

**Ward-Steinman, David**

*Taj Mahal*

**Weber, Carl Maria von**

*Euryanthe Overture*

*Invitation to the Dance*

*Jubel Overture*

*Oberon Overture*

*Overture to Der Freischütz*

**Williams, John**

*Concerto for Tuba and Orchestra*

**Zanotelli, Hans**

*Eulogy for Eudora*



## Appendix B: Opera and Ballet Repertoire List

**Adam, Adolphe**

*Giselle*

**Adamo, Mark**

*Little Women*

**Bartók, Béla**

*Bluebeard's Castle*

**Beeson, Jack**

*Lizzie Borden*

**Beethoven, Ludwig van**

*Fidelio*

**Bellini, Vincenzo**

*Norma*

**Berg, Alban**

*Wozzeck*

**Bizet, Georges**

*Carmen*

**Boito, Arrigo**

*Mefistofele*

**Borodin, Alexander**

*Prince Igor*

**Britten, Benjamin**

*A Midsummer Night's Dream*

*Albert Herring*

*Peter Grimes*

*The Rape of Lucretia*

*Turn of the Screw*

**Cavalli, Francesco**

*Scipio Africanus*

**Cherubini, Luigi**

*L'osteria Portoghese*

**Cimarosa, Domenico**

*Il Matrimonio Segreto*

**Delibes, Leo**

*Coppelia*

**Donizetti, Gaetano**

*Don Pasquale*

*La Fille Du Regiment*

*L'Elisir D'Amore*

*Il Furioso*

*Lucia Di Lammermoor*

**Flotow, Friedrich von**

*Martha*

**Floyd, Carlisle**

*Susannah*

**Ginastera, Alberto**

*Beatriz Cenci*

*Bomarzo*

*Don Rodrigo*

**Giordano, Umberto**

*Andrea Chenier*

**Gluck, Christoph Willibald**

*Orfeo ed Euridice*

**Gounod, Charles**

*Faust*

*Romeo and Juliette*

**Handel, George Frideric**

*Giulio Cesare*

*Rodelinda*

*Xerxes*

**Haydn, Joseph**

*World of the Moon*

**Hoiby, Lee**

*Natalia Petrovna*

**Henze, Hans Werner**

*Elegy for Young Lovers*

**Hindemith, Paul**

*Hin und Zurück*

**Humperdinck, Engelbert**  
*Hansel und Gretel*

**Lortzing, Albert**  
*Hans Sachs*

**Mascagni, Pietro**  
*Cavalleria Rusticana*

**Massenet, Jules**  
*Manon*  
*Werther*

**Menotti, Gian Carlo**  
*The Consul*  
*The Old Maid and the Thief*  
*The Medium*  
*The Saint of Bleecker Street*  
*The Telephone*

**Moore, Douglas**  
*The Ballad of Baby Doe*

**Mozart, W. A.**  
*Così fan Tutte*  
*Der Schauspieldirektor*  
*Die Entführung aus dem Serail*  
*Die Zauberflöte*  
*Don Giovanni*  
*La Finta Giardiniera*  
*Le Nozze di Figaro*

**Mussorgsky, Modest**  
*Boris Godunov*  
*The Fair at Sorochinski*

**Nicolai, Otto**  
*Die Lustigen Weiber von Windsor*

**Offenbach, Jacques**  
*Les Contes D'Hoffmann*  
*R.S.V.P.*

**Phan, P.Q.**  
*The Tale of Lady Thi Kinh* (world premiere)

**Ponchielli, Amilcare**

*La Gioconda*

**Poulenc, Francis**

*Dialogues of the Carmelites*

**Prokofiev, Sergei**

*Cinderella*

*The Fiery Angel*

*The Love of Three Oranges*

**Puccini, Giacomo**

*Fanciulla del West*

*Gianni Schicchi*

*La Boheme*

*Le Villi*

*Madama Butterfly*

*Suor Angelica*

*Tosca*

*Turandot*

**Ravel, Maurice**

*L'Enfant et les Sortilèges*

**Rimsky-Korsakov, Nikolai**

*Le Coq d'Or*

**Rorem, Ned**

*Our Town* (university premiere)

**Rossini, Gioachino**

*Il Barbiere di Siviglia*

*Il Turco in Italia*

*La Cenerentola*

*L'Italiana in Algeri*

*Signor Bruschino*

**Saint-Saëns, Camille**

*Samson et Dalila*

**Sandstrom, Sven David**

*Jeppe* (American premiere)

**Schneitzhoeffter, Jean-Madeleine**

*La Sylphide*

**Shostakovich, Dmitri**

*Katerina Ismailova*

**Smetana, Bedrich**  
*The Bartered Bride*

**Strauss, Johann**  
*Die Fledermaus*

**Strauss, Richard**  
*Ariadne auf Naxos*  
*Der Rosenkavalier*  
*Intermezzo* (American premiere)  
*Salome*

**Stravinsky, Igor**  
*Histoire du Soldat*  
*Oedipus Rex*  
*The Rake's Progress*

**Telemann, Georg Philipp**  
*Socrates*

**Tchaikovsky, Piotr Ilyich**  
*Eugene Onegin*  
*The Nutcracker*  
*Sleeping Beauty* (Act III)  
*Swan Lake* (Act III)

**Verdi, Giuseppe**  
*Aida*  
*Ballo in Maschera*  
*Don Carlos*  
*Falstaff*  
*La Forza del Destino*  
*Macbeth*  
*Nabucco*  
*Otello*  
*Rigoletto*  
*Simon Boccanegra*  
*La Traviata*  
*Il Trovatore*

**Wagner, Richard**  
*Der Fliegende Holländer*  
*Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg*  
*Das Rheingold*  
*Tristan und Isolde*

**Ward, Robert**  
*The Crucible*

**Weber, Carl Maria von**  
*Der Freischütz*

**Weill, Kurt**  
*Three Penny Opera*

**Wolf-Ferrari, Ermanno**  
*I Quattro Rusteghi*  
*Il Segreto di Susanna*

## Appendix C: Selected Photos

**Figure 1: David Effron, aged 2-4 years, c. 1940-42**



Figure 2: David Effron graduate recital program, 1961

INDIANA UNIVERSITY  
SCHOOL OF MUSIC  
Forty-Fourth Season—One Hundred Fourth Program  
1961-62

---

GRADUATE RECITAL

**David Effron**  
*Piano*

---

I

Partita No. 5 in G Major - - - - - Bach  
Praelambulum  
Allemande  
Corrente  
Sarabande  
Tempo di Minuetto  
Passepied  
Gigue

II

Sonata in F Minor, Op. 57 (*Appassionata*) - - - Beethoven  
Allegro assai  
Andante con moto  
Allegro ma non troppo

III

Suite, Op. 14 - - - - - Bartok  
Allegretto  
Scherzo  
Allegro molto  
Sostenuto

IV

Sonata No. 3 in A minor - - - - - Prokofiev

---

In partial fulfillment of the graduation requirements of the  
Master of Music degree in Piano (P600).

---

Recital Hall  
Sunday Evening  
November Twelfth  
Eight-Thirty O'Clock

—160—



**Figure 3: David Effron in rehearsal with the New York City Opera Orchestra, c. 1968**



**Figure 4: David Effron in performance with the New York City Opera, c. 1969-1970**



**Figure 5: David Effron in performance with the New York City Opera, c. 1972**



**Figure 6: David Effron in performance with the Brevard Music Center Orchestra, 2006**



**Figure 7: David Effron in performance at Indiana University, 2012**



**Figure 8: David Effron in performance at Indiana University, 2012**

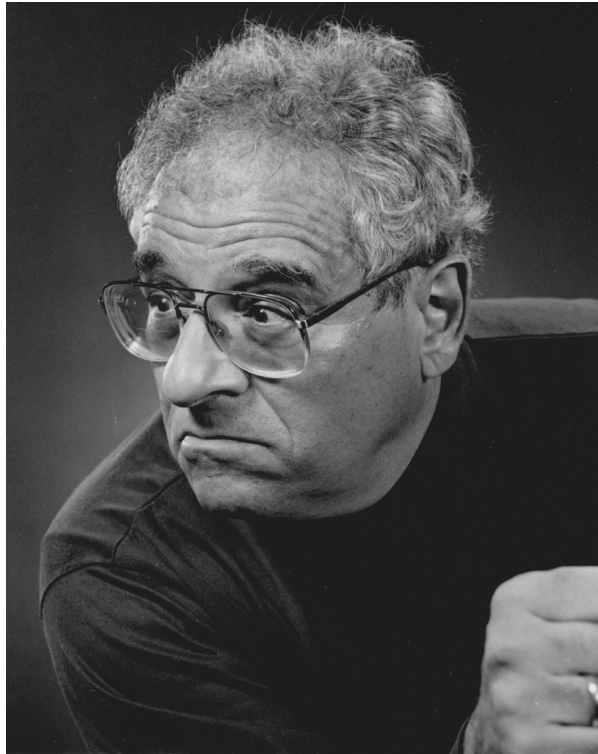


**Figure 9: David Effron in rehearsal with Indiana University Opera Theatre, premiere of P. Q. Phan's *Tale of Lady Thi Kinh*, 2014**





**Figure 10: David Effron, Indiana University faculty headshot, 2000**



**Figure 11: David and wife Arlene Effron with Ian Passmore, Indiana University retirement concert, 2016**



## Bibliography

Beethoven, Ludwig van. *Symphony No. 7 in A major, Op. 92*. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1863.

Brahms, Johannes. *Symphony No. 4 in E minor, Op. 98*. Edited by Hans Gál. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1926-27.

Mozart, Wolfgang Amadeus. *Le Nozze di Figaro, K. 492*. Edited by Franz Wüllner. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1879.

Sibelius, Jean. *Finlandia, Op. 26*. Leipzig: Breitkopf & Härtel, 1905.